

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

Saturday, January 1, 2022  
Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Kyle Whittingham

Devin Lloyd

Britain Covey

Press Conference



Ohio State - 48, Utah - 45

THE MODERATOR: Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us for tonight's post-game press conference from the 108th Rose Bowl game presented by Capital One Venture X. I'm joined by the runner-up team from Utah. Coach Whittingham will give an opening remark, and we'll open up the floor for questions for Coach Whittingham and the student-athletes present.

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: I'm sure the fans and the networks got their money's worth out of that one. It was a heck of a football game. Give credit to Ohio State. They played exceptionally well, particularly on offense. That quarterback is terrific. Statistically the best in the country, as far as quarterback rating system, and he proved it tonight.

I'm proud of our guys. I'm proud of our guys. They got absolutely nothing to hang their head about. They fought the entire 60 minutes and came up short, but still made Utah football history this year, Pac-12 champions, which had never been done in our program.

So I told them that exact same thing in the locker room. They've got nothing to hang their heads about. It's been a terrific season. Yeah, we're all disappointed that we didn't win the game this afternoon, but that's how life goes.

Again, give all the credit to Ohio State. Like I said, they're very talented, and we just didn't have quite enough in the tank tonight to get the job done.

**Q. Kyle, on the final Ohio State drive, you had all three timeouts. Was there any thought to using one or**

**multiple of them?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Yeah, if we could have got them behind the chains at least one time. Other than that, all we were doing is helping their cause, making first downs and second and short.

They only had one timeout left. I didn't want to help them out. It was a catch 22. Had we gotten them behind the chains, second and long, third and long, absolutely. It was in the back of my mind. But the way the drive unfolded, I don't know if we got them to third down one time.

It was certainly in my mind, but when they only had one timeout, they couldn't afford to stop the clock for them in certain scenarios, particularly in short yardage would have been detrimental.

**Q. Kyle, I'm thinking I want to get your opinion on it, this quarterback, best you guys have faced maybe since Justin Herbert a couple of years ago?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: I would say that's probably accurate. The kid is tremendous. Like I said, the QBR, the quarterback rating system that ESPN uses, which in my estimation is the most accurate and the most telling of statistics for determining how well your quarterback's playing, he leads the nation. I think you saw it tonight why.

**Q. Kyle, what happened with Cam Rising there? Did he get knocked out, and how's he doing?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: I don't think he ever lost consciousness. I wasn't there right when he hit the turf obviously. I came out there shortly thereafter. He's doing fine now according to what the post-game report was. Unless something that we don't know about materializes, he should be okay.

Speaking of that, couldn't be more proud of what Bryson Barnes did when he came into a tough situation and led the team right down the field for the tying touchdown. Had an inclination to go for two right then, but too much time left

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on the clock. Had there been under a minute, would have gone for two. That was the mindset.

They had a full two minutes, and the analytics said not to do it either at that point. So we just went for one. But Cam will be okay and proud of Bryson Barnes for what he did.

**Q. For Britain and Devin, what are the emotions going through your head right now now that you guys have played your last game as a Ute?**

BRITAIN COVEY: Just a lot to take in. It's starting to hit me finally. I don't want to take my pads off. Just proud of this team and this program, this university.

I just have a great love for the University of Utah and -- [ crying ].

Sorry. I'm just grateful.

DEVIN LLOYD: Just like Covey was saying, it's obviously very frustrating, especially coming up that short. But Coach Whit hit on it in the locker room, we've accomplished so much this year, and we've banded together as a brotherhood this year.

It's obviously frustrating, very frustrating to come up this short, but that doesn't take away anything that we've accomplished this year and all the success that we've had this year.

**Q. Britain, were you shocked that Ohio State kept kicking off to you? And kind of walk us through your kickoff return.**

BRITAIN COVEY: I had an inkling that we might have a few opportunities this game, just based off of sea level, how far he kicks it. If you notice after that kickoff return, they started kicking it short, trying to kick it to our up fullback. They kicked it out of bounds one time.

I think after that, they started to -- I was surprised that very last one, but then they played kind of a prevent, kind of contain. That's usually what happens with returners is beginning of season, first three or four games, you get some chances. Then after that, people stop kicking to you.

I think the only reason why is because we were at sea level or whatever and it doesn't travel as far.

**Q. Kyle, I wanted to ask you, you brought this up about the idea of if the timing had been different, you might have gone for two. Was there any idea about trying to milk the clock down so you would have that last chance? Or was there just too much time left in**

**your situation? I know it's a catch 22, you would like to slow it down, but you have momentum going.**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: The latter. With Bryson in there, very little experience, we didn't want to put anymore strategic stuff on his plate than we had to. I thought he did a great job of engineering that drive, got us to the end zone.

At some point, we have to play defense. We didn't play very well all night long on defense. It wasn't our usual. Not sure we'd be able to get a stop. It all started with poor coverage on the kickoff. Our kickoff unit all night long just wasn't up to par where we needed to be. Put us in bad field position several times, and that was one of them. Unfortunately, that was the game winner.

**Q. Kyle, obviously, you had Micha Bernard on both sides of the ball. Was there any decision to have him play both there? And how do you feel that went having him as the starting corner?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: We felt he was our best option at corner. We had three of our top four corners down. That's no excuse because you've got to play with who you've got healthy. Micha, we moved him over from running back, and we felt he was the best option after evaluating things in practice.

Yeah, it was the plan to play him sparingly on offense, full-time on defense, and actually no special teams work with the exception of he was the off return on the kickoff return for the first couple, then we subbed him out of that as well.

Yeah, Micha, he gave us everything he had, and we appreciate his coverage for making that change. He hadn't played defensive back since high school, and to be willing to do that for us, I'm proud of him, very proud.

**Q. Two questions, Kyle. You have some idea of what's coming back next season. You know what's coming in. Is there a reason to believe that there could be a similar level of success next season just knowing what you have?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: We're excited about the youth and the talent on this football team. We went through the roster the other day, and it was 72 of our 85 scholarship guys are scheduled to be freshmen or sophomores again. We were almost in the same boat as this year. Many, many of those guys are playing for us already, particularly on defense.

We're optimistic about the future. Can we repeat? I think it's too early to talk about any of that right now. We do like

the level of talent, particularly the young talent on this football team. Looking forward to working with them starting this winter.

**Q. And just to clarify, was Bryson number two, and was Ja'Quinden available tonight?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: J.J. was available, Bryson was number two, yes.

**Q. This question is for all of you. What is it about Utah football for Coach and Devin and Britain, that makes you guys never quit?**

DEVIN LLOYD: I think it starts with the culture that Coach Whit sets, and he establishes in each and every one of us. Then from the top down, it's just a matter of everybody buying in, assistant coaches buying in, players buying in, and it's really the type of guys they recruit. We have the underdog mindset where we're never out of it.

Even the higher rated guys, those are the type of guys that he wants in the program, and those are the type of guys he gets. Then it's a matter of just really buying in.

BRITAIN COVEY: I think this season is kind of a good metaphor for our team, right? Starting off 1-2, losing a couple of our teammates, battling back through everything. I think it's just a good metaphor for our team and for life. I think the reason why our program has that identity is because of the stability that Coach Whit's brought to it. We kind of just feed off of him.

Then like Devin said, most of us are one or two star guys coming out of high school, a lot of us are, and three star guys, and you kind of carry that with you and band together.

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Yeah, I stand with these guys, their comments. They have a warrior-like mentality on this football team, and warriors don't quit. That's just the bottom line. There's a great deal of mental toughness on our squad. The players that we recruit into the program learn from the guys that are already there. The standard is set. We have a saying the standard is the standard, and that's what the expectation is.

And the new recruits that come into our program become us. We don't become them. They become us. We're a mentally tough, physically tough outfit. That's what we pride ourselves on.

**Q. The passion that you all play with is evident. Result, throw it out the window. What is it that you guys love about the game of football? For all of you.**

BRITAIN COVEY: That someone my size can go against someone his size (laughter). I think that's what I love about football is just you look at someone like Bam Olaneni, 6'8", 340 or whatever and you look at me, 5'2", 120, and you put them on the same field. You each kind of have a niche.

I think that's what I love about it. It gives everybody an opportunity, no matter what body type or whatever it is, it's the ultimate team game where you just take a bunch of different types of players, types of people from different backgrounds even in life, and you just put them together and say make it work.

DEVIN LLOYD: Starting off for me, I first started playing football, I really just played it because I enjoyed it, it was fun. As the years have progressed, I really found how much actually comes with football. The brotherhood, that's something that lasts forever. And the life lessons it teaches you.

Football has really changed me as a man just because it's made me hone in on all the little details. Everything translates from the game to real life. I would just say I love football because of everything that comes with it.

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Yeah, for me, it's the ultimate team sport, as Brit said. The intricate strategies within the game are so complex, I don't think even well-versed fans don't understand. Unless they played the game, you just don't understand it.

It's a sport where you rely so heavily on each other, you got so many different body types, like Brit said. But for me, I've been around it since I was 2 years old. My father played professionally. He was a coach. I got into coaching after I played, and it's been part of my life forever.

What I will say is the chance to develop these young men -- and I'm not talking about on the field. Yeah, we take two, three-star players and develop them and end up having a lot of them drafted and being able to make a career of this game. But if that's all we did, then we failed.

Our main objective is to develop them as people, and there's so many lessons to be learned in football, discipline, work ethic, attitude, sacrifice. Everything that you learn to carry you through to the rest of your lives is far more important to me than development that occurs on the field. That's my take on it.

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