

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

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Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Karene Reid

Press Conference



presented by



Q. Talk to me a little bit about what this year was like for you guys, because your year quite a bit like Penn State's in that you started out really good, suffered some losses, lost the game to Oregon. It looked like, oh, we're not going anywhere great. Then all of a sudden you're in the Rose Bowl. Talk about that ride.

KARENE REID: Yeah, dude, it's been crazy. I think the most important thing is that we controlled what we could control. On the chance it presented itself for us to be in that championship game, we were ready for it.

It wasn't a perfect season by any means, but I feel like we put ourselves in a position to be ready to succeed.

So it's been crazy, but it's been a heck of a ride, man.

Q. And now you're in the position to become the first team in school history to win a Rose Bowl.

KARENE REID: Right.

Q. That's has to be, I would think, kind of exciting, something you didn't think possible a month ago, right?

KARENE REID: Yeah, no, I mean, originally to start the season we were like, man, let's go to the playoffs, let's make history, right, because we've already been the Rose Bowl.

But we didn't win last year, so if we want to make history we got to win this game.

Q. Right, right.

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. Last year's game was a fantastic game obviously. I mean, didn't end fantastically for you guys.

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. But it was probably one of the best Rose Bowls ever played. What do you draw from that, and how much does that motivate you, even though this is a different year, slightly different team?

KARENE REID: Yeah, I hear that from fans all the time, like one of the greatest games to watch, right? But as far as being on the defensive side, if we could have gotten just a couple more stops, right, totally different game.

I think is a as defense we have a lot to prove to be on this stage again. I hope it's a lot more of a defensive game than it was last year.

Q. I know offense is pretty popular in the Pac-12 and you're playing a team in Penn State that has a lot. They have a veteran quarterback, two freshman running backs who kind of lit it up this year. Talk a little bit about, I mean, in terms of facing a time like that, do they remind you of anybody you played this year? Talk about the challenge of trying to shut down somebody like that.

KARENE REID: Yeah, as far as the style of the offense, maybe Oregon State, a run-heavy team. But I've been really impressed with both their running backs and their offensive line, so we'll have our hands full with that run game for sure.

Q. I think both these teams pride themselves on toughness on both sides of the line of scrimmage.

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. In that, is this a great opportunity to just test your toughness now and see who is going to be the tougher team?

KARENE REID: Yeah, that's a great point. I think we've been talking about it as a team since we knew we were playing Penn State. We pride ourselves on being the toughest team in the PAC, and now we have a chance to prove ourselves on a national stage that we are really



tough and aggressive.

Q. How much did you enjoy Disney yesterday?

KARENE REID: It was good. Man, I have a little six-month-old son, so once he was done, the whole show was done. We took the first bus back. We were happy to be out there.

Q. Did you watch your teammates riding the horse-drawn carriages down Main Street? What kind of experience was that?

KARENE REID: That was cool. They looked like some real celebrities out there, man. It was if you know, yeah.

Q. Wasn't quite Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, but...

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. How important is it when you come to a game like this, any big bowl game, to balance the fun with the getting down to we have the game to play on Monday?

KARENE REID: Yeah, man, Coach Whitt's been praising that all week long. Like you deserve to have fun, right, you made it this far, but what's going to determine who wins the game is who can focus when it's time to focus.

So we've been -- we've already felt that in the first practice, how intense and serious the coaches were. As fun as everything is, it's still a business trip. It's still about the game.

Q. Mixing business with pleasure, right?

KARENE REID: Exactly.

Q. Good. Good luck to you and your newborn son.

KARENE REID: Thank you.

Q. Funny, the first time I ever came out here for a Penn State-USC game my son was two weeks old. My daughter was like six, and so we just put him on a plane being took him out here and they had a great time.

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. I was working my butt off covering the Penn State-USC game. I'll never forget that, two-week old infant. He was perfect.

KARENE REID: Yeah, dude.

Q. The next time when Penn State played in the '94 Rose Bowl against Oregon he was three at that time. First time he ever really remembered and he was great until we landed and puked all over me. Memories.

KARENE REID: Memories. That's awesome.

Q. I'm with the Rose Bowl. We're doing a couple social media things.

KARENE REID: Got you.

Q. Just a couple quick questions for you.

KARENE REID: Okay.

Q. First one: Who in the locker room is not getting the aux cord?

KARENE REID: You know, everyone says Dalton Kincaid, so I'm just going to hop on that and say Dalton.

Q. Word on the street is you're one of the guys that doesn't get the aux cord.

KARENE REID: No. There is no way. I don't even use the aux cord, so I don't know how they can say that.

Q. What kind of music are you playing if you get it?

KARENE REID: Anything from Island to rap to country. That's why they can't say me, because I'm so -- I have so many different kinds.

Q. All right. Who on the team has the most exotic hobby?

KARENE REID: Oh, that's a good question, man. I know a lot of people are fishers, but outside of that, I'm not too sure.

Q. That's all I got. Thank you.

KARENE REID: Appreciate it.

Q. How was Disneyland?

KARENE REID: Once my six-month-old son was done, we were done. We caught the first bus back. It was good to be around the guys and see everything that Disney has to offer.

Q. Had you been there before?

KARENE REID: Yeah, yeah. It's different with a newborn, though.

Q. Yeah. What can you do with a six month old?

KARENE REID: The tea cups and that's it. That is it. (Laughter.)

Q. It's a boy, right?

KARENE REID: Yep.

Q. His name?

KARENE REID: Manu.

Q. How do you spell that?

KARENE REID: M-a-n-u.

Q. Now that you're here, we talked about this for a few weeks, how exciting is it to now that -- like when we had you on television it seemed like it was in the distance, so much had to happen, Christmas, all that. Now that you're here and doing prep, how exciting is it to know that you're going to be in the]Rose Bowl in a few days?

KARENE REID: I love it, and I love the vibe that I'm getting from the coaches. It's very businesslike. I think it was very exciting leading up to it, but now that we're here, I've been really impressed with the focus of the team with everything that's going on, right?

Q. Yeah. So is it easier because most of the folks, most of the kids have been through it to have the more business game focus as opposed to all the stuff that goes with it because you had that experience last year?

KARENE REID: Yeah, that has a lot to do with it. It's still exciting, but like you said, because we been here before -- like if you talk to Junior, seems like everyone is more focused on the game than last year for sure.

Q. And then I would assume that would lead to better opportunities to win.

KARENE REID: Yeah, for sure. I think because we've had all these what would you say, gifts, blessings, but the trophy is the one thing we didn't get. That's what everyone is going for.

Q. As you delve deeper into Penn State, what are you

seeing?

KARENE REID: I'm just really impressed by their run game. I think if we don't do a good job of gap control they're going to make us pay. Those running backs combined are the real deal, so...

Q. It's kind of funny in that Utah's strength since Kyle has been there has been run defense. You guys have been so good over the years. Players come and go, but it's still run defense. And then you look at Penn State's offense where their strength is running game, so it's going to be strength against strength I would think.

KARENE REID: Yeah.

Q. I don't know if it plays to your strength more because it's what you do, but at the same time, it's what they do. How do you figure it out?

KARENE REID: Yeah, I mean, that's our comfort zone is teams running the ball. If they're able to establish the run game on us, then they can stable the play-action game, and so we got to make sure from the start of the game that we stop that run and force them to spread the formation and pass the ball.

But that is our comfort zone, so we got to keep it that way.

Q. How gratifying has it been for you as a defender to see -- Morgan was just talking about this -- to see the defense from August you go to now make the level of improvement it's made in those three months?

KARENE REID: It's crazy. I haven't really taken the time to step back and think about it like you said, but it's crazy. I mean, UCLA, USC the first time, right, those are some pretty poor performances. Ever since we tightened it up seemed like week to week it's just gotten better. It's been amazing.

Q. How does playing USC give you the confidence...

KARENE REID: Yeah, USC has had a lot of national attention since their first game, and so to be table beat them twice, more so than proving to other people, it's proving to ourselves like we can hang with the top teams in the country.

Q. So you said focusing on Penn State's run game was a big thing. How do you balance focusing on the run while paying attention to the pass, especially with Penn State's tight ends?



KARENE REID: I think they go hand in hand. Once someone establishes the strong run game, then they have the play-action off it, and that's when their tight ends for the most part get involved.

As much as we're focused on the run game, we have to make sure we have those tight ends in our eye as well.

Q. What differences do you see between Penn State's two running backs?

KARENE REID: 10 seems more physical in my opinion; 13 has a little bit more juice to him as far as side-to-side movement.

But outside of that, they seem pretty similar to me, to be honest. Both can make it happen. They get down the field, so I've been impressed both of them.

Q. Your defensive coordinator and a couple other guys said that they most remind you of Oregon State. Would you agree and why?

KARENE REID: Yeah, I was just saying that, too. I think because Oregon State has such a strong run game and they succeed. They're successful in what they do. In order to have a strong run game you have to have an O-line with great technique and discipline, and that's exactly what I see from Penn State.

Q. What makes your defense so successful?

KARENE REID: I would just say since the middle of the season to now we've become a lot more disciplined in gap control. No one is really giving up gaps. When we did in the past, that was some of our poorest performances.

Q. What have you seen from Penn State's offensive line?

KARENE REID: Just great hands, moving at the same level, not a lot of -- they don't give up a lot of gaps in the run game.

So just discipline and technique.

Q. You've obviously been a part of this last year, first experience, but what is maybe the redemption this year?

KARENE REID: Shoot, I was just saying that because it's our second time around I feel like we have already experienced everything, right? So we're not as big-eyed about it and everybody just wants to get the trophy.

That's one thing we didn't get to experience last year. The vibe from the coaches at practice yesterday was a lot more businesslike than I remember.

Q. Do you like that, that everybody is locked in that way?

KARENE REID: Yeah, I love it. I love it. I think we had our fun last year. We still deserve to enjoy this, but I think second time around it's about the game.

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