

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Pasadena, California, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions Juice Scruggs

Press Conference



Q. How's it going, Juice?

JUICE SCRUGGS: How you doing?

Q. Good. What do you think of everything so far?

JUICE SCRUGGS: It's been amazing. It's my first time on the west coast, so it's pretty exciting to see like the different scenery and stuff. Yeah, it's been -- you know, it's exceeded my expectations so far, definitely.

Q. For sure. How difficult of a decision was it to declare for the NFL draft?

JUICE SCRUGGS: It was definitely hard. I was contemplating, going back and forth thinking about coming back or going. At the end of the day, I just sat down with my family and my supporting cast and just realized it was the best decision for me to just go for it and put my name in the draft.

But I'm excited to get one last chance with my brothers and go out there for the Rose Bowl.

Q. First of all, congratulations.

JUICE SCRUGGS: I appreciate it.

Q. Second, why did you want to play in the Rose Bowl? It's kind of an obvious answer, but opting is out is getting popular.

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, so me, I was always brought up and raised, like I get this from my dad, never quit. Whatever you start, finish it. This season has been a great season for us. It'll be even greater if we just finish what we started and get that Rose Bowl Championship.

Q. Do you think that's a common theme across the team, because Brenton also declared?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Right. Yeah, I just think that's the culture we have in the locker room. You see Brenton, you see all these guys just want to go out there and get a ring that says "champion" on it. That's our goal.

Q. Since you're leaving, what's your confidence level like in the guys that are returning? Like Olu is returning, Hunter is returning, and then some of the younger guys stepping up?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, I got nothing but faith in those guys. Olu as you guys know, is going to be a top 10 pick in the future. Hunter, he is going to be a great center. Those guys, the young guys, Drew Shelton and Vega stepping up. And then you got Landon coming back off injury. You got Nick Dawkins coming back from injury. You are just going to have a whole bunch of guys that are going to have a lot of depth, and I'm excited for them, man. I'm going to be rooting for them every week.

Q. When you say Hunter is going to be a good center, what makes that so?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Oh, yeah, just if you watch him at guard you can realize that I think he's a center, but just when I watch him in practice, just how quick he is off the ball. I don't think you guys understand how fast he is. Like in the summer he ran 19 Miles per hour and that's unheard for an offensive linemen.

Q. Just for comparison...

JUICE SCRUGGS: I was like -- my top speed was like 17.

Q. And what's the fastest you've ever seen?

JUICE SCRUGGS: That, 19, yeah. For an O-linemen for sure. And just how fast he is and how explosive he is when he makes contact on the second level. He's going to be a great center for us.

Q. You made that transition from guard to center. Looking back, what was the biggest challenge that you thought you would face making that transition that he'll face because of how it all played out?



JUICE SCRUGGS: Really, and I told him this, just being loud with your ID and being vocal more than you think you have to, over communicate. When you get that down it all just plays in the part, because you're just playing guard really. You're playing both sides of the ball.

So once he gets like communication down and doesn't have to worry about it, it becomes second nature, sky is the limit.

Q. You said you went back and forth on your NFL draft decision. So when did it come to the realization that is that you wanted to do?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Literally like the day before I posted.

Q. And you posted it...

JUICE SCRUGGS: The 23rd. Yeah, so like that day, the night before. It just hit me. My family, I told my family and they were like, we got your back. We support you. They just let me know they were with me no matter what.

I don't know, just something I guess God telling me. It was just something I felt. I just went for it.

Q. What kind of feedback have you got from scouts in the NFL?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Anywhere from fourth, fifth, sixth round, but that all changes, and I'm looking forward to putting myself out there and changing that projection for sure.

Q. Where will you train? Have you figured that all out yet?

JUICE SCRUGGS: I'm still in the works of it, but I should figure it out by the end of this week for sure.

Q. In terms of what you've seen from Utah so far, anything really jump out about them?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Just how fast their linebackers are. They run to the ball, come downhill, and their D-line up front is big and strong. We just got to come out and play our game and we'll be fine.

Q. What's the origin of Juice as opposed to Frederick?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, so when I was little my dad gave me my nickname, Juice. I had it my whole life. He said when I was little I didn't drink milk, just wanted juice. I was actually called Juicy up to like middle school, and then

when I got to high school people stopped calling me Juicy and started calling me Juice.

It just stuck for real. I still tell people like my name is Juice. I don't really like Frederick that much.

Q. Did you like Juice in middle school?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I would always tell -- like some teachers was cool about it and some teachers wasn't. I would be like, hey, my name is Juice. You always get that reaction. It was funny.

Q. Utah and Penn State had losing years in 2020. Michigan had a losing year and is now back-to-back playoffs. Obviously that was an outlier because of COVID, but when you look back at that season what stands out about it?

JUICE SCRUGGS: The 2020 season?

Q. Yeah.

JUICE SCRUGGS: I just think, like you said, COVID played a big part in it. When you get a new offensive coordinator, whole new staff like that on the offensive side of the ball, it's just hard to really install how you got to over Zoom. I am sure you guys know Zoom. It affected all of us.

But it was just really hard to get the chemistry and everything together off a Zoom call. It's not the same as in-person, so I really think that played a big part. I think it humbled us as a program. We had I want to say nine- or ten-win seasons back-to-back, and then you get the season like that, and it's just -- it humbles you and makes you go back and work even harder. I think we needed it.

Q. You weren't worried at all about the trajectory of the program?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I got all my faith in Coach Franklin. He knows what he's doing.

Q. Second year under Mike Yurcich. How has that consistency helped you in this area in particular?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Oh, yeah, I love Coach Yurcich. I believe in his game plan. Every week the game plan is great. And just pigging-backing off what I just said about like installing the offense to last year, you guys saw the rough part of the first install.

And then this year you're seeing how we progressed and basically how much we learned and how much they tweak

things to make it fit the scheme of the players we have. I think they did a great job this year doing that, and I think it showed on the tape.

Q. Was there a particular moment when you knew you wanted to come out for the NFL draft?

JUICE SCRUGGS: I would say it wasn't like a particular moment. It was really just thinking about all the things that could happen like if I come back or if I go. I was just weighing my options and I just chose to go and just went with my gut.

Q. Do you think you're mentally and physically ready to take on the NFL?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Absolutely. I feel like Penn State through my four and a half years here has prepared me. They did an unbelievable job getting me to where I was now, because I came in 260, skinny, and they got me -- I'm 310 now. They got my body right, mentally right. I know more about offense than I ever did.

So, yeah, I think I'm ready.

Q. You mentioned how the coaching staff sort of tweaked the offense to match what you guys do, what was the adjustment that allowed you guys to...

JUICE SCRUGGS: I can't go into too much detail. I'm not trying to give our playbook away like that. Basically they just changed up the scheme, made it easier for the O-line up front to go out there and play and just block. That's it for real.

Q. What was the tipping point in the decision making? When you were weighing it, obviously you were considering a lot of things, but what was the one thing that you said, you know what, it's time?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Really just it's been my dream my whole life to go in the NFL. Just to have a chance to even do it is unreal, to be honest with you. Ten-year-old me wouldn't even believe how far I got.

So it was just basically just realizing I have a chance in a lifetime to do something that nobody has ever done in my family. I just went for it. I'm just ready.

Q. Juice, a lot of guys who opt for the draft opt out of a bowl game, and you a couple guys on this team chose to play in this bowl game.

JUICE SCRUGGS: Right.

Q. Why is that, do you think?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Like I said earlier, I just think it's the culture here. Since spring workouts, winter workouts, that's been our theme: Resilience. We been fighting and fighting, and I think it's only right to go out there and fight one more time together with this group of guys.

This is the last time we are going to have this group of guys in the same locker room, and I just think we all want to go out there and get a ring that says "champion" on it.

Q. How much did your family play a part in influencing your decision so far?

JUICE SCRUGGS: They definitely played a big part. My mom, my dad, my brothers, my girlfriend, they all played a big part in my decision. But one thing I will say, they all have my back no matter what. If I chose to come back for a sixth year, they would have my back.

That's one thing that I think is important for like guys that is going through this process. You got to have a good supporting cast that's going to support you no matter what. Not just there for the fame, the money, and all that bull crap. Just there for and got your back.

Q. Juice, what would it mean to go out Monday as a winner? And secondly, what do you think the future of this program is?

JUICE SCRUGGS: To be honest with you, it would mean a lot to me to go out on top as a Rose Bowl champion. That's a perfect story, to be honest.

And then for the program, it would just be momentum for next year. As you guys see, we got some great young talent, and that would just be like momentum for them to just go forward. Me personally, I'm calling it now, I think they're going to reach the playoffs next year.

Yeah, I think it would be great.

Q. What have those conversations been like with the other seniors on the team as you're heading to your final college game?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, it's definitely bittersweet. You know, I was talking to Todd Burton and we was just basically talking about because we came in together and just how fast it went. You know, feel like yesterday we got here, freshman, just trying to figure out what we were doing.

Now it's our last college football game. It's just kind of



surreal. But it's going to be emotional for sure after the game, and I'm just trying to enjoy it right now.

I know I'm going to tear up at some point. I'm trying to hold it in.

Q. You guys have done Disney; you're going to eat all-you-can-eat prime rib tomorrow night. Is there anymore fun you can have than what you guys are having?

JUICE SCRUGGS: I'm going to be honest with you, this bowl game has shown nothing but hospitality to us. I'm appreciative because I went to Fogo de Chão. Whoa, yeah, I might have met my match. Because I was eat but I was full will. I had to put the red card down. I was done.

Yeah, I've had a lot of fun here and I'm just ready to go out there and play.

Q. How do you balance the fun with knowing it's time to get down to work?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, it's just moderation for real. You just know you're here for a business trip. At the end of the day you can enjoy yourself, but that's what those first two nights was. We enjoyed ourselves; now it's a business trip. Let's go handle business.

Q. Can you describe your career from being a freshman to where you are now and how you have grown on and off the field?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Yeah, freshman year I came in and my kick set was horrible. Fundamentals wasn't up to par. Didn't know much about offense. Like I didn't know Mike ID, didn't know Will. I didn't know really much.

Coach Trautwein came in, and that's really when my career started to take off. He came in and he saw something in me. We put extra work in. I just kept going at it, stayed consistent, kept doing what I had to do.

Me from freshman year to now, it's a compete 360. I was just kind of in that redshirt mode when guys get redshirted, like not preparing like a starter. To now it's just like I'm showing young guys how to prepare. It's totally different. I never thought I would be in this position, to be honest with you. I'm just grateful.

Q. Are you nervous or more excited about the next step?

JUICE SCRUGGS: I'm definitely excited, but nerves, they come. If you're not nervous, something wrong. I'm

definitely excited and I'm looking forward to it for sure.

Q. What was that moment like when you pushed send, put it out there? What was going through your mind?

JUICE SCRUGGS: It's just like monkey off your back. I've been going through this for a few weeks now, thinking about it, having conversations with my family. It's just like a sigh of relief almost when you press the send button. You just know it's done, like you got it out there.

Yeah, it felt good for sure.

Q. Did you hear from anyone out of the blue after you declared?

JUICE SCRUGGS: Like who? What do you mean? In general? Yeah, definitely. Got a lot of love for sure on social media and definitely people were hitting my phone. Definitely appreciative to know that they pay attention and they're watching and supporting me. I appreciate all the love for sure.

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