

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Pasadena, California, USA

## Penn State Nittany Lions

### Mitch Tinsley

#### Press Conference



**Q. How was traveling and getting here and everything like that?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Great. They put us in a nice plane getting here. I've enjoyed every moment of it. It was a nice long flight, but I enjoyed it. We got here, and it's been good being here in L.A.

**Q. No delays? No Spirit Airlines?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Nothing like that. Top of line, for sure.

**Q. I know you've only been here for a couple of days now, but how have you enjoyed it and personally for this Rose Bowl?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I'm enjoying every single day. I feel like for me I'm just trying to enjoy every part of the day as far as the practices. You know, even our downtime. Yeah, I'm enjoying every aspect of it.

**Q. Is it surreal a little bit given, hey, you've come in here as a one-year transfer, and you're able to play in a Rose Bowl, and you're only a year here?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I'm still trying to grasp it for sure, but yeah, it's definitely surreal. It's a dream come true to be able to play in this game.

**Q. What do you remember about that decision to transfer? Right now a lot of guys across the country are going through the portal and going through that process. What do you remember about that process for you?**

MITCH TINSLEY: During that process, it was more so I wanted to take a chance on myself and bet on myself like I always have. Playing at the Power Five level and playing against the best competition week in, week out was really important to me, so that was what went into my decision.

**Q. How much of a sell was that from Coach Franklin and Coach Stubblefield and the staff of coming and playing here?**

MITCH TINSLEY: It was a big sell. I mean, they had just had Jahan that left, and I seen the success he had. For me, you know, being able to go against the Ohio States, the Michigans, the Michigan States, all these -- Auburn, all these different schools. I'm, like, I want to be a part of that.

**Q. You roomed with Cliff, right?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Uh-huh.

**Q. Are you still rooming with Cliff?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, I still room with Cliff.

**Q. When you first got on campus, was that immediate right then and there that you guys hooked up?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, he welcomed me in for sure. You know, we have kind of have been clicking ever since. As we've been together for a while now, our relationship has grown. We hang out a lot in the living room whether it's watching games or NBA games or whatever. We just kind of grown.

**Q. Who are you a fan of in the NBA?**

MITCH TINSLEY: In the NBA I'm a LeBron fan, so wherever LeBron goes, that's where I watch him. Yeah.

**Q. Can you take me back to your recruitment in high school and how you got to Western?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I didn't have any offers out of high school. Only played my senior year of high school, so I kind of did that to myself.

But, yeah, I had zero offers. I ended up walking on at the Hutchinson Community College. You know, like I said, I bet on myself and walked on there and ended up starting halfway through my freshman year.



Then my sophomore year came around. I had eight or nine smaller Division I schools, and I ended up going to Western Kentucky.

**Q. You said you only played your senior year in high school? Was it just late to pick up the game?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I played football my whole life growing up. I had been asking my dad to play basketball and to try other things. I wanted to continue to play football, but I wanted try other things also. Really I kind of just wanted to take a year break. That was the plan. Just take a year break and then I would get back into football.

But then basketball, I ended up really enjoying it. So I ended up playing all the way up until my junior year, and, you know, I don't know why I did that to myself. But, yeah, then I came back my senior year.

Yeah, it was just -- it kind of wasn't really a smart move on my part. But, yeah, it's all good, man. It's all good.

**Q. It all works out.**

MITCH TINSLEY: It ended up working out for the best.

**Q. So you played football until eighth grade and then high school was --**

MITCH TINSLEY: I didn't play in high school until my senior year.

**Q. Was your football coach, like, what are you doing? When you started playing your senior year, you know, at your high school, was your coach, like...**

MITCH TINSLEY: At that point my football coach in high school had never seen me play, so he just is seeing -- he knew me from basketball, and he was, like, okay, let's see what he's got, that type of thing.

I don't think he really knew that I had played before. I was actually pretty good at a young age. But, yeah, I mean, I think he really enjoyed me being on the team, things like that.

**Q. What's been your favorite game, moment, play of the season for you personally, if you can narrow that down? If you can't, it's okay.**

MITCH TINSLEY: It's probably two things. I had a deep ball against Auburn. That's up there.

Probably the one-handed catch against Minnesota. That was probably my two moments that really come to mind.

**Q. We talked in the past about your journey. I know I asked you this last time I talked to you, but has it hit yet that you're kind of here? After everything, now that you are in Los Angeles, you're about to play in the Rose Bowl, you have all this going on, has it hit you yet that you have come this far since not really playing in high school?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would say yeah, but I know, you know, just that's kind of how life goes. You really don't really grasp the whole thing until it's over. You know what I mean? I think for sure I'm going to appreciate every moment of being here, and it's nice to be in L.A. for a week.

Yeah, I'm enjoying it, and I feel like I'm trying to appreciate the moment.

**Q. Have you had a chance to reflect on the season yet, the decision you made and what came of it? And how do you feel about how it all went?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, definitely. I've reflected a lot. Honestly, I feel like I made the best decision for myself being able to come here, produce, and help my team out however I could, whether it's catching the ball or blocking. For me that was the most important thing.

And I wanted to prove not only to know else, but also prove to myself because I always knew that I could play at this level, but being able to do it and come here, earn a starting job, those were all important things to me.

**Q. What's the thing you have improved on most this season that has helped your NFL stock, do you think, that sets you up for the future?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Taking advantage of my opportunities, for sure and definitely getting in on my breaks. I feel like that's something that I've been big on all spring, all summer is just getting in on my breaks. I feel like those things I've done well this year.

**Q. So has Penn State asked you to kind of I guess help them explain what the opportunity might be for potential incoming transfers that they might bring in in 2023 at the wide receiver position? I'm just curious because you had your experience. Seems like it was a positive one. Have you kind of lent your resources to what they're doing there at all?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Like as far as helping --

**Q. Maybe when a guy comes on campus or a guy has**



**questions about what it might be to transfer at this position.**

MITCH TINSLEY: I told Coach Franklin and Coach Stubs that I'm willing to help however I can. There's been a few guys that have come in. But, yeah, I said what I had to say to them. You know, definitely gave them positive experiences from my point of view. So I've tried to help for sure.

**Q. When you look back on the transfer portal, how nervous were you to do that?**

MITCH TINSLEY: To hop in the transfer portal?

**Q. Yeah. Was it an easy decision? Was it a hard decision? There's a lot of guys who landed where they want to land. You're a success story with that, but there's a lot of guys who haven't. What was your mindset going through the portal?**

MITCH TINSLEY: For me it was, like, I don't think -- if I wouldn't have had the season I had the year before, I probably wouldn't have hopped in the portal like that because I feel like for some people it could be a death trap. You know what I mean?

I feel like for me I knew I wanted play at the Power Five level, and I wanted NFL scouts to see me playing against the best competition week in and week out. So I feel like for me hopping in the portal after the year I had, I knew that there would be some Power Five schools that at least wanted me. You know what I mean? It ended up being really good for me when I got into the portal.

**Q. What were those two weeks like, the recruitment process of that? How hectic was it? How many schools reached out to you? I don't know if you can share which other schools were after you? We talked about it a little bit when you committed, but if you could take me back to what those two weeks were like, and also how did Penn State separate itself?**

MITCH TINSLEY: It was definitely different going from high school and no offers and then, you know, almost feeling like a Five Star when I entered the portal. I basically had offers or I was talking to my dream schools really.

**Q. Can you share a couple? Who were --**

MITCH TINSLEY: My dream school was USC growing up. I was a big Reggie Bush fan. They had offered me. UNC, Tennessee, Rutgers, Louisville, Florida State, Texas A&M, Ole Miss. Yeah, I mean, it was --

I feel like what separated Penn State, the day I got in the portal, they were there the next day.

**Q. Coming to see you?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, coming to see me. I felt like they were really genuine and honest. I felt like -- to me I'm not big on promises. Oh, we're going to do this and this. They're, like, you come here and work, you can earn whatever you want. So I felt like that was important to me.

**Q. How much impact has living with Sean this year had on you?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I feel like it's really helped our chemistry. We're able to talk about it obviously on the field and in the meeting room, but when we come home, we can relax and just talk about other things. I feel like those things have combined being able to help our chemistry for sure.

**Q. Is when you came here to Penn State, is this the type of game that you expected to be playing in, and what you hoped you were playing in when you came here?**

MITCH TINSLEY: For sure. I hoped definitely to be playing in a New Year's Six game or playoff game for sure. I knew that the type of team we had, the type of talent that we had, and I was really expecting to be here. Well, I can't say here in this bowl game, but definitely in a game like this.

**Q. When you got paired up with Utah, what were your initial impressions of them and kind of what were your thoughts?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Utah is a good team. I seen the way they played against USC in their conference championship game. They have got a tough defense.

But, you know, I think if we execute the way we know how to, I think we'll come up on top.

**Q. On that note, how do you get off to a good start against a team that you have never faced before?**

MITCH TINSLEY: That's a good question. I mean, we just have to do what we know how to do and control what we can control. I feel like that's the biggest thing.

**Q. Is there a team from the Big Ten that you feel like resembles what you have seen on tape about Utah?**



MITCH TINSLEY: I don't know. That's kind of hard to compare teams. From what I have seen, their front seven, their D-line and their linebackers are really solid for sure. The DBs are really good, but I don't know. Yeah, that's a tough question.

**Q. You're good. Sean said Purdue, so I didn't know if you had your own thoughts about that.**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah.

**Q. How much have what Nic and Kaytron have done this season really opened things up for the passing game for you guys?**

MITCH TINSLEY: When you have two beasts like that, you have to focus on that. You know what I mean?

You have them both combining for, I don't know, what do they have, 800, 900 yards, something like that. I mean, you have to be worried about that.

And then you have -- open up the passing game. You have three tight ends: Brenton, Theo, Tyler. And then you have the weapons out here at receiver.

I mean, I feel like it's just tough. I think we're well-rounded. We're not just one-sided. I think we can do a lot of different things to attack a defense.

**Q. When you look around and see all the Rose Bowl paraphernalia in your hotel and all the nice stuff you have and this trip, what does it mean for you to be here?**

MITCH TINSLEY: It's a dream come true. Being able to be here in this moment, it's crazy. As a senior with zero offers, I dreamed of being in situations like this and being in moments like this, being interviewed, stuff like that, but now that I'm actually here, I really appreciate it, and just being here is a dream come true. Yeah.

**Q. What did your parents say?**

MITCH TINSLEY: What? About coming to this game?

**Q. Yeah.**

MITCH TINSLEY: They were just really happy for me. I think after our last game, they kind of knew that we were going to be in a big bowl game, but they knew that Reggie Bush is my favorite player, and he played in the Rose Bowl in '06, '05, something like that. Just being able to be here is kind of just full-circle really for me and my family.

**Q. During the last month, what have some of the other receivers done on the field? There's a lot of questions about who is going to step up, and that really starts with the Rose Bowl and goes into next year. What have you seen? Anyone specifically that you feel like has really flipped that switch in the past six, seven weeks?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah. It's tough to name one person, but I would say Trey Wallace, Kaden Saunders, Ivey, Anthony Ivey, and T.J..

**Q. What can you tell us about Anthony? He spent the season on the developmental squad, so we didn't get a ton of looks at him?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I feel like -- he got here in the summer, so I feel like spring is really important as far as getting the reps, being able to learn the playbook and things like that.

But I think as far as that, he has gotten a lot more consistent and I feel like well-rounded as far as knowing the complete offense. Not just his position, but knowing everything. I feel like he is doing really well with that.

**Q. The same thing for Tyler, as someone who got here and we just haven't really had a chance to see.**

MITCH TINSLEY: He is pretty much on the same path for sure. I think he is definitely learning the offense. He has learned it, and I think he will step in the game whenever they get the opportunity.

**Q. You mentioned Kaden. He got here in January, so we've got a bigger sample size with him. What has he kind of gone through? Taylor Stubblefield mentioned him kind of maturing, working his way into a college athlete.**

MITCH TINSLEY: I feel like Kaden was a dog when he got here for sure. He kind of had that process that I was saying about Ivey and T.J. in the spring. But, I mean, for sure -- and he was behind Parker and Jaden Dottin. It's kind of one of those different things too.

You know, yeah, Kaden can play. I feel like he is going to step up and make some plays on Monday also.

**Q. You talked a little bit about your journey getting here last spring. Penn State is still trying to add this offseason one way or another. What is your pitch for someone that's looking to come here?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would say if you want to compete and play against the best week in, week out and against the



best in practice, this is the place to be. You get coached by the best coaches who have coached at the highest level.

I would also say that this is a good place as far as the fan base. 107,000 people showing up to home games. You know, it was almost sold out every game for the most part. It's definitely a good place to be.

**Q. How much did being at Penn State change who you were as a receiver compared to Western Kentucky?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I feel like -- I don't know if change is the right word, but I would say added on. I feel like for me I've learned a lot of different things from Coach Stubs, our OC, Coach Yurcich, even our support staff. Yeah, I mean, I definitely think that it's only grown me as a player.

**Q. How is it for you to be able to say you can end your college career in the Rose Bowl?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I can say it's a dream come true. It's a dream come true.

My first Rose Bowl that I ever watched was USC versus Texas, and Reggie Bush was my favorite player, so it's kind of full-circle.

**Q. Now are you playing in the game. Did you ever imagine that?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I imaged it. I didn't know if it was actually going to happen or not, but, yeah, it's cool to actually be here and be in L.A. for a week. You know, like I said, it's a dream come true.

**Q. Is it tough to balance the fun because there's a lot of fun in this game. There's the Disney. There's the bowl tomorrow night. Is it tough to balance that knowing there's a game on Monday and you have to get down to work?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I don't think so. I think everybody is handling it pretty well for sure. There's a time for play and time for work. The main goal while we are here is to win this game.

Of course, we want to enjoy ourselves while we're here, but for me and the rest of the team, we're ready to focus up and get this win.

**Q. When you look at Utah, can you see Penn State sometimes in the way that they're made up, toughness on both sides of the line of scrimmage?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, I definitely think they're tough for sure. They do a lot of good things. I haven't really watched their offense, but on defense they do a lot of good things. They're well-rounded as far as D-line, second-level defense, linebackers, DBs.

I think they're well-rounded, and I think they're a tough defense, but I think if we execute the way we know how to, we should be able to come up on top.

**Q. Do you think you're better up for a physical challenge in this game than maybe you have in the past, this team?**

MITCH TINSLEY: We've been tested all year. The first game of the season, that was a nail-biter. I feel like we're ready, and we're a tough team, and we've been tested. I think we'll be ready.

**Q. Is there any defense that you have played this year that you can compare to Utah?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I don't really like comparing. I think they're a really good defense. They do a lot of good things, but yeah, I don't really know if there's anybody I could compare them to.

**Q. You told us I think maybe in early November, late October about how Drew had grown since August. Can you tell us maybe how Drew has grown from midseason to where you are now wrapping up on fieldwork with him?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I think it's pretty much the same as far as rate of change. You know, as time goes by, you get better at things.

**Q. What do you envision for him moving forward based on what you have seen? We've seen flashes, but you have seen him daily grinding.**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, I mean, going into the future, I see him as kind of how he came in the Purdue game. He was poised, ready to go, ready to attack the moment. I feel like that's what Drew does well is being able to attack the moment and be present.

**Q. What do we need to know about Bo because he is a good who hasn't gotten that game experience. Right now with Christian moving on, there's going to be more focus on Bo and his position in the quarterback room.**

MITCH TINSLEY: I feel like Beau will be ready also. Coach Franklin has a saying: Prepare like you're the

starter. And I feel like Drew and Beau both do those things really well. I feel like, you know, they'll be ready come next year.

**Q. Who has influenced your work ethic? Now you are playing in the Rose Bowl, and obviously you had to work very hard to get here, so are there players or somebody growing up?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would definitely say probably my parents. My dad worked really hard. He worked a lot of different jobs growing up, and he always emphasized if you want something, you have to go get it.

At an early age, 5, 6 years old I was cutting grass and stuff like that. If I wanted to earn money, this is what I had to do. You know, it was just one of those different things.

I feel like for me it also came from within also. Football is what I love to do, so, I mean, for me it wasn't really hard. It was hard, but like I'm saying, it wasn't really hard to work hard. You know what I mean? It's something that I wanted to do.

**Q. Did you have a goal senior year of high school?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah.

**Q. What was it?**

MITCH TINSLEY: My goal was to be here. It was to be at a Power Five school. That was my goal. I wanted to go to the junior college route and make my way all the way up. As hard as it has been to get here, I feel like that was my goal that I set out. I didn't know everything was going to happen the way it did, but it definitely worked out for the best.

**Q. So you say you fulfilled your goal and also put a cherry on top with the Rose Bowl?**

MITCH TINSLEY: For sure. Obviously the biggest goal was to make it to the NFL, but not only make it, but stay in the NFL. So I feel like for me this has given me the opportunity to play on a stage that all the NFL scouts and GMs and people are going to be watching. You know, even this whole season I've been able to play on a platform that allows me to show what I can do.

**Q. What does it mean for you to be playing in the Rose Bowl?**

MITCH TINSLEY: It means everything. The Rose Bowl is a great game. I remember watching my first Rose Bowl when I was, like, 5 or 6. Reggie Bush is my favorite player,

so USC versus Texas.

Yeah, it's a dream come true to be out here in L.A. for a week. I'm enjoying it, but we're locked in and ready to go.

**Q. You mentioned your dad earlier. Are your parents going to be able to come to the game and watch you play?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Yeah, my dad will be at the game.

**Q. If you had a message to your dad or your family, what would you say in terms of thanking them for supporting you?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would say dad, I really appreciate it. Mom, I appreciate all of your hard work and sacrifice to be able to help me get here. You know, all the love and support. We're going to go get this W.

**Q. Mitch, you have Sean as your quarterback. I just got done talking to him. What is it about him that makes him special? Rather, I don't want to say maybe compared to other quarterbacks that you have played with. Maybe him in this offense as a leader, what does he mean to you? What has he meant to this program?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Everything. I feel like his confidence and just the way he carries himself, I mean, I feel like as a quarterback, it's one of them positions that everybody is watching and looking at and critiquing. You know what I mean? For the most part you can't never be right because it's, like, somebody is going to say you should have did this, you should have did that.

I feel like Sean does a great -- has a great way of handling all these different things, and I feel like for me he is just focused on one play at a time. I feel like that's what he does well and is able to do with helping our team.

**Q. Who would you say is the funniest guy on the roster?**

MITCH TINSLEY: On the roster (laughing).

**Q. Say a few guys, whatever comes to mind.**

MITCH TINSLEY: Parker Washington is up there. Kalen King, KeAndre Lambert. I'm going to stick with those three right now, yeah.

**Q. Just with Parker's injury and him declaring with the NFL Draft, how has this wide receiver room as a whole and you in particular been able to step up?**

MITCH TINSLEY: For sure. I feel like we're ready, and I feel like that's something that Coach Stubs has done well in preparing us for situations like this. I would definitely say that even fall camp, early on in the season making sure that everybody knows the concepts and not just knowing your position, but knowing whether it's slot or both outside positions, I mean, that was kind of big.

I mean, I feel like everybody was able to transition and move -- I'm not going to say smoothly, but being able to slide into another position that they might not have got that many reps in, you know what I mean?

**Q. How is Sean as a quarterback and a leader?**

MITCH TINSLEY: He is great. I feel like what he does really well is being able to focus up and be ready and locked into one play at a time, and I feel like that's something that he pushes everybody else to do. And forget about what happened last play. Don't think about the next play. It's just about being present and locking in and doing your job for one play at a time.

**Q. You guys use tight ends a lot in your offense. What have you seen from that position group?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I mean, they're dogs. Brenton, Theo, and Tyler, I mean, it's kind of crazy how we have three of them. I definitely think they're Sunday-ready. I definitely think that we have a lot of talent in that position.

**Q. What's it been like to see guys like Brenton and guys like Juice be able to make their announcement, be able to declare that they're taking this next step in their career? As a teammate, what's that like?**

MITCH TINSLEY: It's awesome. I feel like I just root for my teammates, and I want everybody to do well. Just seeing that is -- I don't know. No words that can really describe it. You know what I mean?

Everybody is fulfilling their life-long dream, and I think especially for their communities and their families, it's inspiring, motivating. Yeah, it's definitely a cool moment.

**Q. Juice said that he thinks that this team next year has the potential ceiling of knocking on the door of a playoff, being in contention there. Is that something you see too?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would say so. I definitely think that overall we have a pretty young team. Or medium team, I guess I would say. I definitely think that we have a lot of pieces coming back here next year that will be able to do that.

**Q. When people talk about that team next year, with you leaving, with Parker leaving, the wide receivers trying to get brought up, that's a potential question mark. What is it about the guys that are coming back that makes you think that they can answer that, that they can, I guess, have it not be a question mark?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I think all of our young guys are ready for the challenge and are ready to step up and make waves. Trey Wallace are. You have Kaden Saunders. You also have the guys coming back as far as, like, KeAndre, Malick, Jaden Dottin. Those are guys that are vetted that will be ready to step up also. Those are guys that are ready to go.

**Q. Cristian Driver has gotten -- I guess it's probably the longest extended time he has gotten at wide receiver. How have you seen him come along in the bowl prep?**

MITCH TINSLEY: This is kind of like his first time in college with the playbook. He has had his days, but he has also had a lot of success as far as practicing and our seven-on-sevens and stuff like that. I think next year he will be able to add on it too.

**Q. When the season began, this was your first year with the team. How would you -- if you were reflecting on the season -- I know we still have one more game before you finally conclude it -- how would you say you've grown from Week 1 with Penn State to this bowl week?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I would definitely say, I don't know, as a person I feel like I was able to learn a lot from my coaches. Coach Stubs, he is very detail-oriented. I feel like for me that's something that I enjoy. Just learning and picking everybody's brain, whether it's Coach Yurcich, Coach Stubs, Coach Franklin, and being able to learn and not make the same mistakes twice.

**Q. Was there a moment when you fully felt settled into the team?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I will say after that Purdue game I was able to make some key plays to help our team win, and I feel like after that game I was pretty settled in.

**Q. What are your thoughts on Utah's secondary?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I think they're really good. I think they're sound for sure. I think we have a challenge ahead of us, but I definitely think that as long as we handle our business the way we know how to and take care of business as far

as executing at a high level, I really think that there's nobody that can stop us.

**Q. Who in the locker room is not getting the aux cord?**

MITCH TINSLEY: That's tough. I would probably say KeAndre Lambert.

**Q. Why is that?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I don't know. I think we just got two different vibes, man. I think that's just how it is, man. I'm kind of, you know -- I like some of the old school music. Of course, I listen to what's going on now, but I would say that's the difference. He kind of thinks that the music I listen to is not it or whatever, and then the music he listens to, I'm, like, I heard that before. You know what I mean? I don't know. Just two different vibes for sure.

**Q. And then who on the team has kind of the weirdest hobby? Got anyone?**

MITCH TINSLEY: Weird hobbies.

**Q. Yo-yoing or juggling or anything like that?**

MITCH TINSLEY: I don't think so. Yeah. I'll definitely let you know if I do -- if I see that or not.

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