

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

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Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Braeden Daniels

Press Conference



Q. So I was asking members of the defense yesterday who is the funniest guy on the roster.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: On the defense?

Q. Just in general.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Just in general? Man, I don't know. I feel like we got a couple clowns on the team, but I'm going to have to go with Devin Kaufusi. Yeah, he's a character. I feel like he gets a lot of laughs whenever he's around a lot of people.

But, yeah, Devin Kaufusi.

Q. So another name where the popular choice is Stone.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Stone Azarcon? I feel like he's a goofball, too, but I feel like they're both up there, but I think Stone, yeah, he might top Devin after I hear that one, yeah, for sure. (Laughter.)

Q. And then I think RJ said Cam Rising could be kind of funny.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah.

Q. Once you earn his trust a little bit and he opens up to you a little bit; is that true?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, definitely he's like he wants to like make you laugh and just have like a good time, but when it's time to work, it's time to work.

Cam Rising, he can act up a couple times, too.

Q. Talking about Cam, seems like a guy who is about his business; obviously leader of the off as the quarterback. What is he like as the leader and how important is he to this program?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, he's very helpful, just from helping us bring energy to practice and off the field to, you know, put an arm over you when you need a help or you need a brother to be by you.

Just a great guy overall. When it's time to work, it's time to work, and, you know, you can tell when he's serious. Everybody else's demeanor starts to change a little bit. We just try to get work done and become better.

Q. I was going to call this year -- what was the journey for you like this year, but last year was kind of a journey in itself for you guys.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Right.

Q. But just this year, I mean, a lot of people I think looked at that game against Florida early and said, maybe Utah isn't what they were the year before.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah.

Q. How do you guys feel you have developed and progressed since that Florida game?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Definitely there is like going to be changes, you know, throughout the season. It was a great game and a great chance to get out there and be able to compete, but I feel like that was just like kind of the start.

You know, we needed to kind of break that seal a little bit and see what we kind of had, and it was something that we had to face the adversity and it was something we overcame, and overall we ended up here and that's what we have been working for.

Q. Did you play in this game last year?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yes, sir.

Q. What does it mean to be playing in a Rose Bowl again?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, it's nothing but a



bleeding. Some people get to only play in it once, and to get to play in it twice is awesome and something that is exciting.

Q. Second year being here, kind of see what you guys get to do in the community in terms of having impact on the community. What's it like this year or last year in terms of how the community has received you all?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Man, last year, you know, just -- I feel like it was Utah football game, a home game for us, and it was awesome to have the fans and just nuts to see all of them go crazy when we scored.

You get to see the number of Ohio State fans and the number of Utah fans, and we just outnumbered them. Hoping it like that this year.

Q. Is your family going to be able to come out?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, my uncle and my mom and dad. Going to be good to have my family come out and watch.

Q. Nice. If you had a message to your family in terms of thanking that them for being here and also just the support they've given you all season, what would you say to them?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Just appreciate you all supporting me in everything I've done, and I know it's been a long journey and it takes a village to raise a kid, and I am just blessed and thankful.

Q. How is everything going?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: It's good. Just enjoying it. Yeah, it's been fun. Especially Disneyland. Didn't get to ride as many rides last year, so it was awesome to get to experience that.

Q. What was the best ride?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I don't know. Too many of them. Mr. Incredible and then Guardians of the Galaxy.

Q. How did you like the tower of the Terror one?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I was over there, oh...

It was crazy. It was fun though.

Q. That's sick.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah. And the food there. I had

one of the...

Q. Did you do one of the big churros?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, I got one of those. I tried a chili cheese hotdog. Had like this Texas Toast kind of bread. It was pretty good.

Q. Okay. Texas Toast on a hotdog?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, the bread was Texas Toast, something I'd never had before.

Q. Okay. So we're trying to think of like theme videos we can do with the team. What's like a quality in the team? Is everyone obsessed with sneakers or cars or like music? What's kind of the vibe of the team in that sense?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Let's see, I know a lot of people -- I know we used to have a lot of the golfers.

Q. Really?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah. We have all gone out and like played golf with like the fans and stuff like that, so I know our team does that a lot.

Q. Okay. Do you play?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Every now and then. I'm not the best at it, but I'm starting to work on it, work on my game a little bit.

Q. Okay. Are there a lot of courses around Salt Lake?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah. They're really nice, too, with the scenery and the mountains and stuff. Yeah, it's good little vibe.

Q. Nice. All right, golf. That's a good one.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: It's more of like a summertime sport though. (Laughter.)

Q. Yeah, you can't golf like four months out of the year.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: A little too cold.

Q. Do you ski?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I have gone snowboarding before, but I haven't skied yet. I'm a little scared for that one.

Q. Messes up your knees pretty quickly. All right, well, cool. We'll work off golf. Do you watch PGA stuff? Do you know the pros?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah. Couple of them, more just like trying to learn how to play. It's just like kind of building relationships. Yeah, business side of it. Yeah.

Q. Nice. All right. Well, thanks.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Appreciate you.

Q. Just for starters, what would you say is the biggest difference this year compared to last year as you ramp up to the week of the game?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, definitely just after being here last year and getting the experience and being able to see what the Rose Bowl is like, all the traditions, and then coming back this year and knowing it's like more businesslike and more like we came here for a reason and we want the trophy and we want to go and take it.

We know it's not ours and we have to go work for it. That's just the vibe and the way we want to represent the team this year.

Q. What do you see in the Penn State defense as you look at the film and things like that stands out to you?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, I've heard that they're a lot like our Utah defense and they're physical, and I feel like we're a physical team as well. It's going to be a battle in the trenches. We're missing a couple components and they're missing a couple components, but it's going to be a fun game and a good environment to play in.

Q. How would you describe the progression of Cam Rising over when he stepped in obviously last year to where he is today?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I think it's something that like Cam has been working for his entire life. I just think everything he's faced from injuries and things was the adversity that he needed to propel and become the player he is today. I think he's a great player and I really enjoys playing the game of football and enjoys winning and going out there and winning with his brothers for sure.

Yeah, I just think him getting better each and every year and each and every game. He's had like his faults here and there, but it's all part of the learning process.

Q. How much is this a battle of attrition up front? Both team are trying to win that battle in the trenches.

How much does it come down to being able to maintain that ferociousness throughout the game?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Definitely have to come out ready to work and we have to come out physical and we have to be able to dominate. We can't come out slow and be a second-half team. We have to come ready to put some points on the board and dominate.

Q. I'm sure you guys felt all was lost after Oregon, right, not knowing where you're going to go?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Uh-huh.

Q. Probably didn't think you would wind up here. Talk about what it was like after that loss getting back here for you guys?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, we just tried to have a lot of faith and belief and just really keep our head down, keep working, believe that everything is going to work out in our favor, which it did.

So just keep our head on the straight and narrow, have that tunnel vision, and have the same focus we had at the beginning of the year.

Q. How fortunate do you feel to be back here?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Nah, it's definitely a blessing. Last year was fun and a great experience, but this year we really want to bring the trophy home.

Q. Is it more of a business trip this time? Last year you guys were probably, oh, wow we're here at the Rose Bowl. Is it different this year?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I feel like this time is -- we have already been here. We know the scenery. Now we can focus on the game at hand.

Q. I heard you talking about toughness and stuff. Both these teams pride themselves for their toughness on the line of scrimmage. Does that make this a challenging game for both teams? You're going to find out who is tougher, right?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I wouldn't say challenging. It's just part of football. You have to go out there and compete. The more physical team is going to win. The University of Utah football team has to be that in order to come out with the trophy at the end the year, or beginning of the year.

Q. (Regarding defensive front.)



BRAEDEN DANIELS: They have a lot of really fast and good speed rushers and they have a lot of quickness and some really good interior linemen. It's going to be a battle in the trenches, and I think they're going to do a good job. I think we're going to do a better job.

Q. Are any of those guys golfers?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I know Cam is. Makai tries to be a golfer. I have golfed with Vele before, and Thomas golfs. He's pretty good. Every now and then he's a little faulty.

Q. Aren't we all?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: He'll let his emotions get the better of him, yeah.

Q. How was Lawry's last night?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: It was great. It was great. I mean, being from Texas I don't know if it was the best prime rib.

Q. Funny you should say that, because like somebody was asking me to rate it last night. I was like, it was good. Don't get me wrong. But I've tasted better, you know, the smoked meat.

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, for sure. It was decent. I liked the corn and the mashed potatoes, too. It was a good presentation, though.

Q. A lot of people want to talk about the physicality of Penn State's defense, and for good reason. Your group is a good offensive line. What do you feel like you got going right now?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, I think just chemistry and us being together and the adversity we faced not just from this year, but last year. Having basically to be able to regroup with the same offensive line almost and just missing a couple components. But to be able to hit the ground running has just been great and a blessing.

To be able to protect the passer is something we take pride in, and running the football, something we always try to take pride in.

But I think it's just going to be a tough game and it's going to be won in the trenches. I think the offensive line understands that. I think it's something that we're ready to embrace, and it's going to be fun to do it in front of a bunch of fans.

Q. Beginning of the season I think a lot of people were saying that you were the leader of the offensive line.

Do you feel like you've been able to do that and kind of help with that? What's that been like this year for you?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: You know, it's definitely been different just coming in and having to lead the offensive line, and, you know, kind of just taking on that role. If the offensive line doesn't do good I'm the person they're looking at.

I think that I've done my due diligence and been able to help the offensive line in ways that can make us better and ways that can protect Cam a little different or a different way or style of doing things.

I think just helping the offensive line in the way we embrace a different part of the game I guess, and having like -- it's a tough-guy sport, so embracing that part of it is something that I feel like has been a big role for us, battling injuries and stuff like that. It's been good.

But Jim Harding, he's been great to us and he's just been taking time with us. It's been awesome.

Q. Coach Ludwig said that this is probably one of the toughest defenses you guys have faced. Are you able to see that on film? Are you able to get that? What's your impression of Penn State?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: No, I think they're definitely a good defense, overall like put together just from the interior to the safeties and the DBs. I think they're pretty good and have a pretty good scheme, but it's going to come down to physicality and who wants it more and who is willing to go out there and get that trophy.

Q. Some post-season stuff, are you set on 100% leaving the school?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: Yeah, most likely will be declaring for the NFL, but it's been great here and just awesome. I didn't want to leave, but it's just time.

Q. I don't know how to follow that up. Going from right tackle to left tackle, describe what the challenges are of switching positions like that?

BRAEDEN DANIELS: I wouldn't say there are any challenges. I would say it's more like embracing the challenges and, you know, knock out the rust. I've been playing right and left tackle since I was in high school and that was the type of offensive scheme we were in like the tackles would switch, so I been doing it for a while.

I would say knocking off the rust, having the spring ball to be able to work that left tackle set over and over has

always been helpful, and just basically doing the same thing as I been doing at spring ball, but trying to do it at a higher level is something I try harp on and be really good at.

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