

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

Friday, December 30, 2022

Pasadena, California, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions

Ji'AYir Brown

Press Conference

Q. Do you carry your helmet around with you everywhere?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: No, I don't. Greg would bring that with him. If it fit my head, I would have put it on. I'd have it on right now, but it's a small helmet so it doesn't fit my head.

Q. What has this week been like?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: It's been a great week. First time on the West Coast, first time in LA, and I'm getting a lot of new experiences down here. I like the weather. It's a lot better than State College.

But it's been a nice week. I'm getting a chance to bond with my guys one more time and just trying to enjoy the most from the coaching staff, bonding with them, as well and make the most of it.

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

Ji'AYIR BROWN: It means a lot. It means a lot, not just only for me. If I was doing this for me, I wouldn't be standing here right now, but even for the coaching staff, the rest of the players, it means a lot for all of us to be playing in this game. A lot of us watched this game growing up and wanted to be a part of this game as children.

To be literally standing in front of you guys right now doing a media interview for the Rose Bowl is like a dream come true.

Q. What have you learned from Manny Diaz this season?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: A lot. Manny is a very smart guy. I love the way he approaches the game. I love the way he schemes. I have hopes of being a coach one day, as well, so I love his perspective on football. I love the way he dials



things up on the field. Another thing I learned from Manny is a lot on life. He has a great perspective on life that I see through my eyes, as well, and that's how I bond with Manny. I love to listen to his words, his philosophy of the day. That's the most I learn from him.

Q. Was it an easy decision to play in this game?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: Yeah, pretty much easy decision. I knew we put a lot of work in this off-season, throughout the spring and summer. I knew we had to finish this season strong. We came way too far to stop now, so this game is pretty easy decision for me to come and play.

Q. When we talked at Media Day just about kind of the chip on the defense's shoulders, so many guys go to the NFL, you have a new DC, people are kind of doubting whether or not you guys could be at the level you've been at for the whole time you've been at Penn State. What would you say to people who have had those doubts?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: Cut the film more. The defense is a very, very, very talented defense, and if you pay attention closely, I believe that we're one of the best defenses in the country, if not the best.

Yeah, that's what I've got to say to people who said that.

Q. What do you think of Cam Rising?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: I think he's a great player, has a lot of experience with that team. I feel like he's the reason their offense goes. He makes a lot of great passes. He can scramble. He's good on his feet. A lot of people may not see that, but he's pretty good on his feet than the average quarterback. Yeah, that's Cam.

Q. Do you take into account that he may lower his shoulder when he's running the ball?

Ji'AYIR BROWN: I don't know. I'd have to jump into his mind to see if he's willing to do that, but I wouldn't know. I don't think that would be the best decision, but I wouldn't know.



Q. Do you have family in town to watch the game?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: Absolutely. My family comes to every game.

Q. Do you have a message for your family to thank them?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: I'm actually going to come out with a message just thanking my family for their support this season, but mainly what I would say is my family is the reason I'm sitting here right now. My drive, my will, my determination is all driven by them. They've been my biggest supporter before I even came to Penn State, before I even went to junior college. I don't think my mom missed a game of mine since I was -- I don't think she ever missed a game of mine, to be honest with you. My mom is at every game. My brother is at every game, my sisters. Their endless support to travel all the way out here to LA just to watch me play, you can't not recognize them for their determination and their sacrifice they made for me.

I love my family, and I appreciate them the most.

Q. Are you letting yourself feel any emotions this week? Are you trying to cut that off just knowing what this game is, knowing kind of the road ahead of you is uncertain and your time at Penn State is coming to an end?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: You know, beginning of the week, I just let the emotions flow a little bit. As I get closer to the game, it's time to cut that off and dial in on Utah.

Like you said, it's a lot of uncertainty ahead. I'm just trying to keep my feet here, keep my mind and my feet right here. Focusing on Utah is my biggest priority right now.

Q. Your offensive coordinator said this is the best defensive unit you've faced all year. What do you think of that?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: I believe that, honestly. After watching film on them, watching the teams they've played, I honestly do believe this is going to be a great game. I feel like both teams have great defenses, and I believe this is going to be one great game to go down in the books.

Q. What do you think is their strength offensive-wise?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: Their scheme is their strength. They're a powerhouse team. They want to run the ball. They want to be the most physical team on the field. I feel like they do that very well from watching film and watching the teams

that they've played. They've been able to out-physical the opponent, and once they get their running game going, they pretty much can open up a playbook, and they have some great tight ends who make great plays, have some speedy receivers on the outside. Yeah, schematically they do a great job of dialing it up.

Q. Utah's defensive coordinator said Penn State's offense is very similar to their own. Do you see that in any way?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: I don't know how similar it'll be, but I feel like both teams love to run the ball, and once both teams get the ball going and have success in that area, I feel like both teams are hard to stop when they can have that pass game, that run game kind of combination.

You could say they're similar as far as what drives the team, which is the run game, and that's the only way I can see it being similar.

Q. What do you think the strength of your defense is?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: Physicality, the way we run to the ball, the effort, just the passion we play with out there. Just all the things you can't coach, the want, the want to play, the want to run to the ball, the want to execute. I feel like we've got a group of guys who don't want to let each other down, and we're going to do anything by any means to play for each other and make sure we're successful on our end of the ball.

Q. Coach always talks about playing complementary football, so what have you guys done all season to be successful at being able to erase the mistakes when the offense has a turnover?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: So our sudden change defense has been one of the best sudden change defenses I've been around since playing football. Whenever it's a sudden change situation, we don't -- as a defense, we honestly don't care. We go out there like it's a regular P and 10, like it's a first down for the offense. We just love to play defense.

The way the game goes, the sudden changes, the turnovers, none of that really means nothing when you're eager to get out there on defense. It doesn't matter where you spot the ball at. I believe we've got a group of guys who really don't care about that. We just care about getting out on the field and playing defense.

Q. Is anybody giving PJ tips on how to carve up meat?

Jl'AYIR BROWN: Oh, watching PJ eat tonight, watch. I've

seen PJ eat a 24-ounce steak. First I didn't even know they made a 24-ounce steak. When we were down at Media Day back in -- I forget when Media Day was, but PJ ordered a 24-ounce steak with these shrimps that was about 10 ounces and he finished all that before I finished my 12-ounce steak.

Q. Can you talk about the contrast between Manny and Brent Pry, both respected defensive coordinators, how are they alike and how are they different?

JI'AYIR BROWN: I feel like both of them have an edge to them that you don't see from a lot of people. Pry, when I played for Pry, Pry wanted to blitz you, he wanted to pressure you, he wanted to play man coverage. Manny sees those things the same way. Both of them, the way they coach and the way their expectations is for the players, I feel like they both align, being that neither one of them is taking no BS from guys not doing their job and out of gaps and stuff like that.

I feel like that's the similarities they share in defensive coordinators.

Q. When you look at Utah, they almost look like a Big Ten team in a lot of ways, and I know you take a lot of pride in your physicality. What kind of match-up is this going to be? Is this going to be who's tougher come Monday?

JI'AYIR BROWN: I believe so. You know, from watching their tape, watching their games and looking at them all season, these guys have been pretty much out-physicaling every opponent they've played. I don't feel like anybody has matched them as far as being physical.

I feel like Penn State, we're one of the most physical teams around, too, so I think, like you said, this is going to be a game of who's tougher.

That's going to determine the game.

Q. Do you enjoy that?

JI'AYIR BROWN: I enjoy that. I love games like this. It's like one of the games back when they used to play way back then, when the game was played in between the hashes. I love games like this because it eliminates a lot of the tricky stuff and all that. It's just me versus you, man versus man, who's going to win.

Q. What's it like to be able to end your career here in the Rose Bowl? Did you ever see this happening?

JI'AYIR BROWN: No, I never seen it happening. It's nice.

You know, it's nice to end my career here, being that the last two seasons, the way they ended I didn't want them to, so I get one more try to end this way the one I want to, and we're better set in the one I'm in now, Rose Bowl, famous game, growing up watching the Rose Bowl. I'd like it to be remembered from here on out, I can leave a legacy at Penn State, this team can leave a legacy at Penn State, and we're trying to be remembered forever.

Q. What's your personal experience with the Rose Bowl? Was that like a New Year's Day tradition for you growing up for you, 5:00, whenever, just watching TV?

JI'AYIR BROWN: No, it wasn't a New Year's tradition, but you always heard about the Rose Bowl growing up. I watched games when I was growing up. I never, ever, ever even thought I was going to be in college to play in those games. But to be here right now is just surreal, and I can't even explain to you all how far I came, and to be sitting where I'm sitting right now is amazing feeling, and I'm truly blessed and honored to be here.

Q. Does it feel like all the hard work paid off?

JI'AYIR BROWN: It does. It does. It's like, even though it's not finished yet, when you start to see results that you wanted, it kind of makes you work harder because you know, like, the stories that the older guys were telling me, the coaching were telling me back when I was little, they're true. Whoever works the hardest wins. If you work hard, you get what you want in life.

That's what I ran with when I was little. If I put the work in, if I worked extremely hard, if I focused, I could get here. That's all I had in me was hard work. I applied that every day growing up, and it put me right here in this seat.

It only motivates me to work harder because I know hard work pays off.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

