

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

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Pasadena, California, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions

Curtis Jacobs

Press Conference



Q. Curtis, do you know what your plans are after the Rose Bowl? Have you decided yet?

CURTIS JACOBS: I'm just trying to take it one day at time. Just trying to stay focused on the main task at hand. I still got some people to talk to, so I'll have that decision.

Q. If this is your last game, what would you like your legacy to be at Penn State?

CURTIS JACOBS: Just I just want to be me. Just be me. Go out and play how I play. Play how I know I'm capable of and just push that forward.

Q. What are the biggest things you're weighing when you make that decision?

CURTIS JACOBS: It's a lot of -- it's mainly going to come down to talking to my family. I still want to have a real in-depth talk with my parents and get that figured out.

Q. Is that something that you just wanted to put off until after the season?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, yeah, because honestly, when you're thinking about all that stuff -- and I talked to Coach Franklin about that before the season. When you're thinking about all this stuff it can cloud your mind, so I just play football like that little kid that's just joined, just got his helmet.

I just want to take it one game at a time.

Q. You talked about that at the beginning of the season, (indiscernible) finish the season.

CURTIS JACOBS: Uh-huh, yeah.

Q. How do you feel like the season is going for you?

CURTIS JACOBS: I feel like it's going pretty well. I've

showed that I could be versatile, play different positions. I feel like it's been great.

Obviously as a defense we had a great season so that also contributes, but I'm still working through some things.

Q. How much of that is finding yourself and getting comfortable and settling in a new defense?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, it's been amazing. It's been a lot more aggressive approach. I feel like I can be a lot more aggressive linebacker in this system, and I feel like it's really showed my talent.

Q. Speaking of how Abdul has progressed this year. Everybody is raving about him. You have been raving about him for on the long time, too.

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah. I was the first one, right?

Q. I think you were, yeah.

CURTIS JACOBS: (Laughter.)

Q. I guess at what moment did you realize he was going to be really good, that he was going to be special?

CURTIS JACOBS: Obviously everyone saw what he was doing in the summer. He's a really competitive, really fast guy, really athletic guy.

Everyone saw that. It's when we saw that he was able to pick up the football so quick. It's not easy for a lot of people, especially me. It wasn't easy for me coming in.

So just seeing how quickly he picked up the concepts, being able to do certain things and being able to be one of the best guys to do certain things on the team, so that is really what we saw and that's what made him special.

Q. What makes him special, unique?

CURTIS JACOBS: Just instincts, being able to diagnose plays, see the quarterback, go get the quarterback. And



closing speed, I don't think it's matched in college football right now.

Q. When you were presented, whether it was Manny or Coach Franklin who said we're going to put Abdul on the field with you, what did you say or what was your reaction?

CURTIS JACOBS: Honestly, me and Abdul had already talked about it. (Laughter.) We are a really close linebacker group so we talk things out. All or Monday film sessions we're talking about what we're going to do for the week, what's best to do for the week.

I was already ready. I had made it known to the whole coaching staff that whether it was Mike, Sam, or Will, I would play any of those positions if you got the best linebackers on the field, so that was pretty much how that went.

Q. Do you think that flexibility, versatility, will help you with your future when that comes?

CURTIS JACOBS: Well, I developed that flexibility and versatility as a freshman because I just was just a guy on special teams trying to get on the field. You feel me?

So it's just -- I feel like that's going to help me anywhere when I do decide to move on. I feel like that flexibility can help me out because that will be able to plug in to many different positions.

Q. You've played two different linebacker positions.

CURTIS JACOBS: Uh-huh, three.

Q. Three. Now with Abdul Carter also, what have you seen from his progression just to play multiple linebacker spots? What's the challenge of doing that, especially as a freshman?

CURTIS JACOBS: It's a mental challenge because there are certain rules at Sam that you don't have at Will. There are certain rules at Mike that's not at Will. So it's just it's mental.

So being able to diagnose things from different positions, that's really, really hard. I think he's done really, really good job.

Q. Having that experience of playing all three linebacker spots, how do you think that better prepares you for the next level?

CURTIS JACOBS: I think it incredibly prepares me for the

next level because I'll be able to have seen things now that I might see when I do move on.

So I feel like that will really help me from like an experience standpoint, and I feel like it will really make my game better.

Q. As a leader, are you able to kind of, you know, teach players who are maybe playing a different linebacker spot, maybe not in your specific category right now, kind of all across the linebacker room?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, I feel like I can give advice to anybody on the defense for real. When we got in with Manny, I tried to look at every position. I don't really try to hone in on one, because another person's job can conflict with your job, so you need to know what he has to do so you know where your help is.

Q. Curtis, last week on signing day, Penn State brought in another pretty I guess impressive group of linebackers.

CURTIS JACOBS: Uh-huh.

Q. What's your impression of this next group coming to Penn State?

CURTIS JACOBS: I thought they looked good. I watched a little bit of their film. I had the guy Ta'Mere, he was my recruit for a couple days, so it was great talking to him. I talked to him the most, but I reached out to all those guys, made sure they know they have a resource to talk to if they need any help, need anything.

So I just wanted to make sure that we keep this thing going and those guys know they have to come in ready to work.

Q. What's it like being an older guy now seeing these younger guys come in?

CURTIS JACOBS: It's great. It's great because not only am I seeing these younger guys come in, I'm seeing guys that came in with me, like Kobe King, Tyler Elsdon, I'm seeing them grow up, and then I'm seeing the older guys leave and we're assuming a leadership role. So it's been a great experience.

Q. What do you think these couple weeks of practice mean for someone like Keon Wylie?

CURTIS JACOBS: I think it's incredibly important. You're getting a lot more of those reps, especially the practices we had the past couple weeks. You're getting a lot more of those reps, getting to learn the system, really getting to



dive into the scheme and be as prepared as you can.

Q. How have you seen Keon come along this year in his development?

CURTIS JACOBS: He's been great. The main thing I love about him is no matter what the situation, he's always going to come with a smile on his face and a positive attitude. That's going to go a long way.

Q. Curtis, you guys have a respected defensive coordinator; last year Manny really picked the ball up, this year. Can you contrast their styles?

CURTIS JACOBS: I would say the styles are pretty similar from a base concept standpoint, but when we switched, it really felt like we were adding more aggression into our defense, just getting more guys at the quarterback, more guys in the run game. I feel like that's really helped us as a defense.

Q. What does it mean to you to be playing this game?

CURTIS JACOBS: It means the world. I grew up, never thought I was going to play in this game. I can't lie and say I had like dreams, aspirations of playing in it, but, I mean, it's the biggest stage, and you got to make plays on the biggest stage to be a great player.

It's an opportunity for sure.

Q. Do you have family coming to watch you play?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, mom and dad and I think my grandmother is going to come, too.

Q. If you had a message for your family to thank them for their support, what would you say?

CURTIS JACOBS: I would thank them for everything, thank my dad for doing all the things he did, taking me to sports things, making sure I played every sport so I could find the sport I love.

I would thank my mom for being my biggest cheerleader.

Q. You didn't announce the decision for the draft. What goes into the timing of that decision?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, I wanted to make sure I had the season out of the way so all the football is played, all the film is put on tape. Just make sure I talk to everyone possible.

I even have people in the -- I have to still talk to my family.

I have to talk with coaches. I even have people in our organization that I want to talk to that I would love to get their advice on things.

It's just I'm taking my time. I know most people try to get it out there so they can get whatever. I just wanted to take my time and make sure I'm making the right decision.

Q. Was opting out even a thought in your mind?

CURTIS JACOBS: Not really, no.

Q. Do you think the Rose Bowl had anything to do with that?

CURTIS JACOBS: Nah, I would be doing the same thing if we were in the same bowl we were in last year. I just really -- I'm a little more slow with these things because I feel like it can really affect my life and my family's life.

Q. Talking to some of your teammates, outside of football it sounds like you guys are a big video game team, big Madden guys.

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah.

Q. How does that come about in the locker room?

CURTIS JACOBS: For me, I just play Madden all the time. It's just a way get away from a football but you're still in football. It's like a mental exercise for me for real, so I love doing it.

I feel like I am the best on the team. I don't want to start nothing, but you feel me? It's just how it is.

Q. (Indiscernible) was giving you props too. He said you're one of the best. How competitive does it get?

CURTIS JACOBS: It doesn't get really competitive. When you get that score of 21 that fast, you feel me, it's not really that competitive. We got some guys that can play. Abdul is a pretty good player. Malik Meiga, he's really good at Madden. It's a lot of competition out there.

Q. Anyone in this room this can give you a run for your money?

CURTIS JACOBS: I would just say Tig. Probably Tig. He's a football guy, so really knows how to play that.

Q. I bet Manny is sneaky good at Madden, right?

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, he's probably good at it. I don't know if he plays video games. I don't know if he has a son.

Q. We were just talking to coach and we asked him about if there is any comps between Utah and some other teams you've played so far. Talked about how Utah plays a very Big10 style of football. Are there any players you see when you watch the tape, when you guys study, that jumps out to you that you compare to someone you've already faced?

CURTIS JACOBS: I don't know if I can compare it to somebody we faced. A lot of concepts they run are similar to Big10 concepts. They like to get the ball downhill. They run and pound the ball.

They're not a traditional Pac-12 team. They're not how UCLA and USC are. They want to air the ball out and score 45 on you; they're okay trying to score 17 and win the game because they know what they have on defense.

So it's just very similar to a Big10 type team. They want to run the ball and pound it on you.

Q. Manny said that... (indiscernible.)

CURTIS JACOBS: We talk a lot about things and those are really the keys of the game.

Q. Abdul I think will be available for interview for the first time all season coming up tomorrow. You guys prepped him for the talk? He's had such a star year that he's going to be popular.

CURTIS JACOBS: Yeah, well, they do a special thing with the freshmen where they make sure they have training and stuff to be ready, so I feel like he'll be ready.

Q. What did you make of the way he progressed throughout the year?

CURTIS JACOBS: I thought it was amazing. He just picked up the concepts fast and I feel like from there it was just playing football. Once he realized it's the same football game that he's been playing for 10, 12 years, that's when I feel like it got easy for him.

So I'm super excited for what he has in his future.

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