

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

Friday, December 30, 2022

Pasadena, California, USA

## Penn State Nittany Lions

### Kalen King

#### Press Conference



**Q. How has everything been so far?**

KALEN KING: It's been good. It's by first time in Cali, so I'm enjoying it right now.

**Q. What's been the biggest thing that you've enjoyed?**

KALEN KING: I would say we went to Hollywood Boulevard, and we were just walking and seen a lot of stuff. A lot of food and stuff. That's probably the best thing I've seen.

**Q. Joey is out. He missed a game in the season. I think it was against Maryland. I'm not 100% sure, but how much did that game maybe prepare you to be without him in the Rose Bowl?**

KALEN KING: I mean, in our room, in the corner room, we have Coach T. ,preaching like, a next man up mentality. So any time somebody goes down or any time something happens where someone is not on the field, the next person is always ready to step up.

When Joey went down, it was like -- it was no different for me because I approached every game the same, so it was just more like just, you know, same rule as I go by every game really. It wasn't really a difference as far as for me personally.

**Q. What have you seen from Utah so far on tape? How do you think the biggest challenge will be? What do they do well?**

KALEN KING: They're a very talented team. They're very physical. They have good players, good talented players on that team, so it's definitely going to be a good matchup with us, and I'm looking forward to playing them.

**Q. When you play a physical team like Utah, how does that change what your responsibilities are as a cornerback?**

KALEN KING: I mean, it doesn't really change my responsibilities. It just, like, I feel like physicality is it a part of my game as well. Now it's just, like, I can use that as well.

But I still go by the same principles every game. It doesn't really change, like, the game plan for me personally and how I play.

**Q. What are your principles?**

KALEN KING: I just focus on the little things, like not blowing calls are, always just doing my job. Just things like that. I feel like the more I just do my job, the more plays that will just come to me.

If I keep doing my job every play, eventually the ball will come in my direction. I just have to make a play on it. That's how I think.

**Q. How do you feel as a whole cornerbacks room is going to step up without Joey?**

KALEN KING: I feel like we're going to be very good. Johnny Dixon has had a very good year this year, and we have guys like Daequan Hardy and Marquis Wilson, Cam Miller ready to step up and play a pivotal factor in this game as well. So, yeah, I think we're ready.

**Q. When did you learn from being around Joey since you got to Penn State?**

KALEN KING: Man, Joey is one of those guys who, like, he is just leads by example. If you want to see what a real first round corner is, it's Joey.

You know, I had the opportunity to practice with Joey and work out with him and stuff like that. So he just, like, pushed me, man. He was like another person I could go to if I ever had a question or he was just another person that was just around because I'm trying to get where he is at right now.

He is getting ready to prepare for the draft. So just seeing



a guy and playing with a guy like that, I feel like it's definitely a benefit to me.

**Q. How have you taken a more vocal role without someone like Joey here, right? Maybe the voice in the cornerback room.**

KALEN KING: I'm working on my leadership skills. I feel like it will really come into effect after the season, like in the offseason building to next season because we'll have all the pieces for that team, and I feel like my leadership role should definitely increase, so I'm definitely working on that.

**Q. How do you work on something like that? What are the kind of things you do?**

KALEN KING: Just doing things like being more vocal. Just talking to people more. It can be anybody, whether that be a player or coach or a staff member. Just going around, you know, if somebody needs help or somebody is not sure about something, me just telling them and getting their mind ready for whether it's practice or something like that and just things of that nature.

**Q. What's it been like being out here with your brother?**

KALEN KING: It's great, man, because I've never been to Cali. Me or him have never been to Cali before. This will be the first time with each other at the Rose Bowl. It's great.

**Q. What about just the mindset of a corner? It seems like it's a pretty unique position because you're going to get tested throughout a game a lot, and you're going to -- there's going to be times where the receivers are good too, and you're going to get beat. How do you develop that? When did that start for you, and how do you kind of -- is there a fine line between being cocky and confident?**

KALEN KING: I just feel like in high school -- so, like, in high school, just coming from high school, I was really getting beat in games. I went in games, stretches without even getting the ball thrown towards me.

So now that I'm in college and I'm seeing are different teams and stuff and, like you said, anybody can get beat at any time, so I feel like having a quick -- like a one-play mindset is very important for a corner because games are -- some games can go like this, so you can give up a play, you can give up a big play sometimes, and then the ball is going to come eventually again.

I feel like if a corner -- if a player just has a quick mentality

and lets the negative play go and just focuses on the next play, then that's the mindset you need for a corner.

**Q. What have we seen from Cam Miller, who is a first year corner? You're in your second year, but you have already kind of established yourself. What have you seen from him? What do you like about his game, and how have you seen him grow?**

KALEN KING: I love Cam Miller's mindset. Ever since Cam Miller came on campus, he has been very mature as far as, like, even the little things. Me personally, I didn't come in as mentally ready as Cam Miller because Cam came in, he handles all his business. He is never late. He is never on the list. He is always locked in.

Even in practice he is always trying to get better. He is doing reps full speed. You don't ever have to tell Cam to pick it up or anything like that because he is always on 100. He is always trying to get better. I think Cam is going to be a very good player for us.

**Q. Over the course of the season from the first game against Purdue until now, what do you think the biggest thing that you have improved on?**

KALEN KING: I would just say my intelligence of the game and my understanding as far as route combinations and formations and what's coming because at the beginning of the season and last year towards the beginning of the season this year I wasn't really mastering the art of film study and applying it to the game.

I just usually just go out there and just play naturally, but the more and more film study I put in, the more and more time I get to watch the other team and what they're doing, I feel like that helps me on game day.

**Q. I remember last year when Jaquan Brisker declared for the draft, Ji-Ayir Brown said, he handed me the keys to the kingdom in terms of leading that safety room. Would you say that's happened with the cornerback's room with Joey heading for the draft?**

KALEN KING: I would say that because with Joey leaving, I feel like the cornerback room are needs a leader since Joey has left, and I feel like I can be that guy. So I'm just working on that, taking steps every day just to become more vocal and more of a leader and things of that nature.

**Q. Do you feel like your vocalness and your leadership is on point now, or do you still have --**

KALEN KING: I still have things to work on. Like anything, it's never perfect. I still have a lot of things to work on for

that category, so yeah.

**Q. Can you talk about a week or two when Joey had the appendicitis, and you were kind of leading things in practice? What was that like to kind of get your first little taste at leading the whole room?**

KALEN KING: I mean, it was good because it was just like a sneak peek to what would happen in the future. So just me getting that little taste of having the room, like, it just feels good. Now I just have to keep going, apply it, and get ready for next year to lead this team, so yeah.

**Q. With Joey out, Johnny Dixon will get more reps. How excited is he about this whole thing? Have you talked to him at all?**

KALEN KING: Yeah, that's my roommate actually for this trip, Johnny Dixon. He is very excited. I feel like he is definitely going to maximize our opportunity. He is going to be -- it's going to be no drop-off when me and Johnny are starting on Monday. So I feel like it's been like that all year. I feel like we played up to par. I feel like we're ready for this game.

**Q. You're first in the country in pass breakups.**

KALEN KING: Yeah. I think we're going to be good.

**Q. I guess when you have an achievement like that, first in the country in pass breakups, what goes through your mind when you see that?**

KALEN KING: It's a good milestone to reach, but I feel like -- you're talking about the room as a whole or just me?

**Q. You personally.**

KALEN KING: I'm tied with somebody right now, actually. I'm tied for first. I feel like this game I'm just trying to be the clear winner after this game, but are yeah.

An achievement like that, it feels good because it lets you know all the work you're putting in is paying off and things of that nature. I feel like the job is never finished.

When accolades like that come, I take it with a grain of salt because the quick -- how quick somebody can get built up is the same way somebody can get brought down as well. I'm just trying to keep a level mind and just stay ready for this game.

**Q. How do you balance an individual statistic like that with the overall team goals?**

KALEN KING: I feel like I don't really have to balance it because it's really not nothing that, you know, that I really think about all the time because to know is -- it's definitely good to know, and it lets me know that the work is paying off.

The season isn't over yet, so I feel like I can't relax until after the season. So after this game, then that's when I really take it in. Then after that I've got to get ready for next season and try to do better than this year.

**Q. What's your historical familiarity with the Rose Bowl?**

KALEN KING: Oh, man. Charles Woodson. Charles Woodson is my favorite player, favorite corner of all time. Deion Sanders is next, but Charles Woodson is my favorite.

Ever since I'm a kid my dad used to make me watch videos about him and his highlights, and ever since I seen the interception he had with the Rose Bowl and with the rose in his mouth, ever since then I just fell in love with the man.

He is the reason I wore No. 2 my whole life. Unfortunately, I don't wear it here, but he is a big part of why I even started playing football and corner.

**Q. It's probably going to feel pretty surreal to be on the same field as him in the same stadium and stuff like that?**

KALEN KING: It's going to be crazy.

**Q. When was the last time you've been to California?**

KALEN KING: This is my first time.

**Q. What do you think?**

KALEN KING: I like it. It looks like -- you ever play Grand Theft Auto 5, the game? That's what it looks like.

**Q. It's based on some of the landmarks?**

KALEN KING: I've been seeing them, and it looks familiar from the game, yeah.

**Q. That's funny. Ever been to Santa Monica?**

KALEN KING: No, I haven't.

**Q. They have a park that looks like the game too.**

KALEN KING: By the beach with the Ferris wheel? Yeah.

**Q. Why don't you wear No. 2 here? Did you want to wear No. 2?**

KALEN KING: I wanted to but Keaton Ellis currently wears No. 2, so I couldn't get it. I was late to the party, so I had to get 4, but I'm starting to like No. 4. I think I'm just going to keep that.

**Q. Why do you like Woodson? What was it about Woodson that you liked?**

KALEN KING: It was just the way he played the game. He was, like -- in high school I played offense, defense, and special teams. So when I was in high school, I used to watch his highlights and how dominant he was on the defensive end and special teams, return game. Just stuff like that.

Growing up he was like my favorite player to watch. Before my games I used to watch his highlights. I used to turn them on just watching them all day.

**Q. Have you ever met him?**

KALEN KING: No, never.

**Q. If you had a chance, what would be something you would ask him maybe in terms of advice or technique or anything like that?**

KALEN KING: I would ask him for a picture first.

**Q. There you go.**

KALEN KING: I don't know, man, but I got to think about it. I've got to have a conversation with him when I meet him, but I don't know what we'll talk about yet?

**Q. You got to be ready because he could walk in right now.**

KALEN KING: Yeah.

**Q. With that said, how often or have you given up on trying to hit the offensive coaches up saying, hey, you know, I used to do this back in the day, you know, get me in there?**

KALEN KING: Oh, no.

**Q. Get me in there.**

KALEN KING: I don't really do that. I'm really focused on corner now. I feel like if I did play receiver, though, I would

definitely be in the end zone more than once, but I'm not going to say nothing to them. I'm a cornerback right now, yeah.

**Q. What have practices been out here like and what is the transition between practicing back at State College versus once you get out here and it's truly game day?**

KALEN KING: I feel like I approach every practice the same. No matter where we're at, I'm always dialed in ready to play. It's better. I feel like now that we're in Cali, though, it's like hitting me more because we're actually practicing in California. It was raining the other day, so I ain't really like that.

**Q. Right.**

KALEN KING: But we're still in Cali, so it's cool.

**Q. You've been here with really the kind of formation of the transfer portal, so to speak. I was just talking about how you guys seem to bring guys in that fit the locker room in the transfer portal. From your perspective, how hard is that as a player when a program brings somebody in that may compete with you or somebody that is a different position, is there any friction or tension? How does that work in the locker room?**

KALEN KING: I mean, I just feel like transfer portal, a lot of people get the transfer portal and the added competition. It's always going to add competition because that's really the name of the game.

Any time somebody comes in from a different school and, you know, they definitely are going to be looking to be the starter at their position or make a quick impact, but that's just the name of the game. It's a part of the game. So I feel like that competition is natural. It's not really nothing, like, that -- it happens.

But I feel like all the transfers that come on our team, once they really get in the fold of how we practice and how we are in the locker room, it's no -- they have no choice but to -- it's a family here really.

It's never really tension, like, that just stays in the locker room. It might be there initially because people come in and treeing to compete and they want to play, but eventually we just mold together like a true team, so yeah.

**Q. Kalen, what are your impressions of Cam Rising at quarterback?**

KALEN KING: Oh, man, he is a very tough quarterback. I



was watching on film. He is very tough. He is like the heart of the team. He is a very talented player.

He is going to make some plays for that team just like he has done all year, so I'm looking forward to playing him. He is a very good player, and I can't wait to be on the field with him.

**Q. After this game got announced, Jaylon James was talking about Rising. He talked about playing the PAC-12 game where he gets hit, helmet flies off, Rising pops back up. Sean has taken some big hits and popped back up. Even though you're on the defensive side of the ball, what's it like when you have a quarterback who is popping back up after those hits?**

KALEN KING: When you have a quarterback like that, man, it's just, like -- once you see your quarterback, you know, he gets hit and pops right back up, that's just toughness. That just gets the rest of the team going, whether that be defense or offense.

Anybody sees something like that, he pops back and is ready to go the next play, yeah, he is locked in. He is ready to play. I feel like the team just has to match that energy, yeah.

**Q. What's something you learned from Manny Diaz this season?**

KALEN KING: I like Manny, man. Manny came in a very, like -- very determined and very eager to get better. Ever since Manny came in, I feel like our defense definitely just -- we just trust each other, and we just play for each other.

I think that's what makes us so good because we play for each other. Manny is one of those coaches who, like -- he gets you. He wants you, like -- you will want to play for Manny because just the way he talks to us, the relationship he's got with us. Just things of that nature.

**Q. I missed I think a lot of the Charles Woodson talk earlier. When you were growing up, how did you consume those highlights? Was it YouTube?**

KALEN KING: Yeah, it was YouTube. I used to watch YouTube videos. I used to watch documentaries and short films about him. I used to watch anything I could about him because my dad introduced me to him, and he had me watching videos about him.

Ever sense I started watching videos, I just fell in love with the way he played. He was just out there dominant at corner. He was the best player on the field as a corner. That doesn't really happen, but just to be -- just for

something like that to happen, man, it was great to watch. I fell in love with him ever since, and I've been trying to add pieces to my game that he has in his game.

**Q. Did you have one particular video that was your favorite?**

KALEN KING: It was like an NFL Films highlight, his career highlights from his rookie year all the way to when he retired. I used to stay up before games. I used to watch his cut-ups and stuff like that.

**Q. I'm jumping in late here, but I feel like coming into this season there were so many question marks on the defense, just how many guys went to the NFL, a new defensive coordinator. To kind of make a statement like this this season, what does that say about this group of guys and how special you are?**

KALEN KING: I feel like that just -- I think that goes to show it's more to the defense than just names. You can have a lot of good names and good talented players on the defense, but that doesn't necessarily make your defense great.

I feel like it's the way we bond together and the way we are off the field. Just the relationship we have with each other just allows us to play for each other, and I feel like that is what makes us good. It's not really that we're just -- it's a lot of talented people. We're just, like -- we just hone in, trust each other, and we're out there just playing for each other, and I feel like with that comes the plays that we're making. Yeah.

**Q. PJ said you guys are the closest defense he has been a part of. You know he has been here for a long time. What does that say when your leader is standing up and saying, I have played with a lot of talented guys, but this is the closest group?**

KALEN KING: It means a lot because it goes to show how much -- the love we've got for each other. We're not just teammates. We're brothers. We hang around each other. We do everything together. The bond that we have, it just makes the play better.

**Q. What can you tell me about Joey Porter Jr.?**

KALEN KING: Joey is a very good person, man. Joey is one of those guys who -- he is always looking out for the next person. Even though it might be something that he found out or that we won't know and he will let us know. He will always look out for us.

He is just a very great dude, man. He is just fun to be

around. Man, he is very competitive. He is one of the most competitive dudes I've met in my life. He is never scared to go at somebody. That's crazy.

Yeah, Joey is definitely one of those guys I'm definitely glad I got the opportunity to play with him. Yeah, absolutely.

**Q. How do you think Joey has helped you or some of the younger guys take the next step?**

KALEN KING: Joey is, like -- so I'm seeing the path of how I want to be in my career because Joey is a projected first-rounder. He is an All-American. He got all the accolades and milestones you want as a corner.

So just to have a guy like that in the room with me and just know I was competing with him for two years straight, I feel like it did nothing but help me just to have that type of dude in my corner and the opportunity to compete. And just be around him every day was just, like, second to none.

**Q. What do you think you've improved on the most this season in your game?**

KALEN KING: I feel like my intelligence on the field because last year I was playing with really more, like, more naturally. I was just letting the game come to me, just playing without really studying or things of that nature.

But this year I really hounded in on the film study and route concepts and route combinations and formations and things of that nature just so if I see something in the game, then I know what's coming before it happens. I feel like that allows me to make more plays on the ball.

**Q. I misspoke a little on media day. You probably don't remember. You told me then that last year you were kind of just playing off of talent.**

KALEN KING: Yeah.

**Q. Here you said route trees and all those things are clicking. What do you think has been the biggest driving force for you to flip that switch?**

KALEN KING: It was actually my coach, Coach Terry Smith. He had this conversation with me after my freshman year, and he was, like, you're good right now, but imagine how much better you would be if you knew what was coming at you.

Ever since he said that to me, I just took the initiative to just watch more film and just get myself sharper on what's coming at me and what the other team presents in their

plays and stuff like that.

Ever since I started to make that change, I feel like I've been around the ball way more.

**Q. Have you seen yourself take on more leadership role with Joey off to the NFL, or do you plan on taking on more?**

KALEN KING: I definitely plan on taking more of a leadership role because I feel like with Joey leaving, this is an opportunity for me to come up and grab the room as far as from a leadership role. This offseason and going into next year, that's one of my biggest things that I'm working on, so yeah.

**Q. When you have so many examples to point to, you talk about Joey, you have secondary players in the NFL from Penn State, how much do you think that motivates the room? Hey, we know if we put the work in right here in State College, we can make our dreams come true?**

KALEN KING: I'm pretty sure everyone thinks like that because just to know people who were sitting in the same seats as you doing the same thing you was doing, now you see them in the NFL making plays. It's just, like, it can happen. That definitely is motivation to just keep going and just, you know, make a name for yourself and try to be one of those guys.

**Q. Who is a guy on that defense that we're not talking about enough?**

KALEN KING: Let me see. I would definitely say Nick Tarburton is one of those guys that doesn't get talked about enough, but he is a very pivotal part of our defense. PJ Mustipher, obviously, and I would say Johnny Dixon and Jaylen Reed. Those are three guys who bring it every day in practice. They always competing, and they're always ready to compete. I feel like without those three guys, our defense wouldn't be the same.

**Q. What has your secondary done to really compliment what the front seven is doing in terms of --**

KALEN KING: I feel like the secondary and the front seven just work together. We have conversations with our D-linemen throughout the game. Like, man, just keep getting back there, keep putting pressure on them just to -- it gives us more opportunities to make plays.

And they talk to us, like keep guarding them up out there. And I feel like our relationship with the D-linemen is very close. We just talk to each other on the field, and it helps.

**Q. How do you get guys in the right spots to get turnovers all the time?**

KALEN KING: I feel like we are just trusting ourselves. Manny is big on trust, so just trusting your teammate is going to be in his right spot and never trying to overdo or do too much than your job out there on the field.

I feel like all of our players this year have just been doing their job and just the plays that have been coming in because we all trust each other. We're not really going to over-pursue the ball because we know we have help inside or we know we have help up top.

We just work with each other out there, and I feel like when we start playing like that, then we're one of the best defenses in the country.

**Q. Who on the team have you modeled yourself after? Who are some of the best leaders on the team that you can model yourself after and take on that leadership role?**

KALEN KING: Some of the best leaders on our team this year would definitely be PJ Mustipher, Sean Clifford, and Ji' Ayir Brown. Those are three guys who come in every day with the same mentality every day.

They are never down or out. They always got the juice. They always bring the juice looking for opportunities to help us as the defense or just bring information to the defense that they know or to the offense and stuff like that.

Those three guys are definitely the top three leaders on the team, and I'm definitely trying to bring more of a role of them guys next year.

**Q. Have you talked to any of them maybe about any advice they have for you about you being in the leadership role?**

KALEN KING: Not necessarily advice, but I just surround myself around those guys. 'Tig', I'm always around 'Tig' just to see -- I've been hanging with 'Tig' ever since I got here, so it's just like every time I'm around him, he is always saying -- he always has something to say.

It's always a listening point when I'm with 'Tig' because he is such a cool person. He is a very, like -- he is a very giving person. He is never selfish. He is always looking to see how he can help somebody else.

Every time I'm around 'Tig', I'm like a sponge listening to what he has to say because I know he is going to the NFL

after this, so I'm just trying to surround myself with more and more guys like that just because I know in a year's time I'm going to be in their same position as him. I'm just trying to surround myself with people like that and soak up as much as I can.

**Q. What does Utah quarterback Cam Rising -- what does he do different from a lot of the quarterbacks you have faced this year, and how do you go about prepping for a player like that?**

KALEN KING: I feel like Cam Rising is just different because of his mentality. His mentality sets him apart. He is so tough, man. He is never, like -- you know how typical quarterbacks, they shy away from contact. They don't really want the physical aspect of the game, but he is one of those guys he will bring it to you.

That's definitely a very good trait of his, and he is definitely a pivotal part of that team. I'm looking forward to playing him, yeah.

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