

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Penn State vs Utah

Saturday, December 31, 2022

Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Mohamoud Diabate

Press Conference



Q. In the Christmas spirit, we were curious as to what your favorite holiday film is.

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: My favorite holiday film would be -- I don't know, honestly. I don't watch any holiday films. You've got to come up with something else.

Q. What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Check my phone.

Q. How important is it to stay focused when you've got a game in a couple days?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: It's really important. You have to keep the main thing the main thing, keep your main task the main task. With the ballgame a lot of people can become distracted and focus on the activities, going out or doing this or doing that, but you have to be focused on what you're going to do and that's the game, because the game is what everything is all about, what everything is centered all around. You have to make sure that you study and do everything you can to be prepared and treat it just like any other game.

Q. Obviously when you came here you wanted to be in this situation. Now that you're here, do you feel like you've been able to achieve everything that you wanted?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Yeah, I feel like we had a good year. We were able to achieve some of the things, dealt with some things that I felt like were on the table, but it was definitely satisfactory. Satisfying to be here, but to be able to win it is exactly what we want, so we have to be able to finish what our goal was, which is to win the Rose Bowl, not just to be here.

Q. When you look at the way the defense played this year, do you feel like you guys are where you wanted

to be or do you still feel like there's more to add?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I feel like at the end of the season we got exactly where we wanted to be, especially with the game we had versus USC, to be able to win the Pac-12 Championship. We're still building on that. We didn't give up on -- after that performance we weren't like okay, we're good enough. We're continuing to improve, continuing to add things to our game and to our play so we can become better as a unit and better as individuals.

Q. How hard is it to acclimate -- you're an experienced player, but getting into new systems and seeing what Utah does.

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Definitely a challenge. Utah does a lot of difficult things that are -- that's why we're able to have some schemes that -- what we're good at as players, what the coaches have known for years. It was definitely a tough transition but it was worth it in the end. As time has went on it's become easier and it wasn't nearly as hard as anyone would have imagined just because the coaches and the players, everybody is helping me get to that point. It's much easier than anyone could imagine.

Q. A lot of people say on paper these two teams are similar. Do you feel that way?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I mean, I definitely feel like we're both two teams who like to run the ball, run some play action and play good defense. In that case, yeah, we're similar. Of course there are differences when you talk about intricate ins and outs, but overall I feel like it's not that much of a difference when you're looking at the match-up.

Q. J.J. said he's the best Madden player on the team.

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I'm the best Madden, FIFA and UFC player on this team and maybe even in the Pac-12 and maybe even on this side of the Mississippi River.

Q. Coming from the south, how has the food been up here in Utah?



MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I plead the fifth.

Q. Going against Penn State (indiscernible)?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Just win. You know, just being here really isn't enough for us. We had a long journey, whatever, to win the Pac-12 Championship together, put some good memories in the bank, but now it's time to finish it and put the icing on the cake. I just want to go out here with the guys, fight our butts off and win. That's it. That's our main goal is to win, leave here with a victory.

Q. I've been going around asking a lot of the guys who they think the funniest guy on the roster is. Who do you think is the funniest guy on the roster?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Me.

Q. Do you think so?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I don't know. I don't know who else -- I don't know, I just make myself laugh. To me, I'm the funniest guy, to me. But to somebody else, I don't know. Maybe Devin Kaufusi. People might say Devin. I don't know who else would be funny.

Q. A name that everybody is saying is Stone.

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: I don't know, I don't really think Stone is funny.

Q. You don't think so?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: See, this is the thing. This is the thing that people have to realize. When people are raised in different sides of the country, they have different senses of humor. So things that are funny to some of these guys, to me it's like -- things that would have me on the floor about to die, they're like... that's how it is, I don't know. To me, J.J. is funny, Money is funny. Money is from Texas. That's close to 'Bama.

Q. Stone is not in your Top 5?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: No.

Q. What part of the country are you from?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Alabama.

Q. And Stone is from --

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Somewhere in the Midwest, not the deep south. But I love Stone. That's my brother. I love Stone. But I wouldn't say Stone is the funniest.

Let me think who else.

Q. Some say Cam Rising could be a little underrated as one of the funniest?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: BD is funny, Braeden Daniels. He's a funny guy.

Q. On a more serious note, you guys going up against Penn State, what are your thoughts on what you see from them? What are your expectations?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: They're a good team. They have a good running back, two good running backs, two guys that do a great job running the ball, producing yardage, producing big plays. They've got a quarterback back there, 14, who does a good job managing the game who's a good quarterback. You can tell he's older. He has experience.

Good O-line. They have a little bit of injuries, but no matter who's been in there, they've been a productive unit on the offensive line. I feel like it's going to be a good match-up. I'm really excited to get out there and compete with them. They seem like they're physical. They seem like they love to play. It'll be a good game.

Q. What is Cam rising like as a player? Does he keep you guys on your toes?

MOHAMOUD DIABATE: Yeah, Cam Rising is a great player who definitely challenges you. He brings the best out of you every day in practice because of the way that he approaches practice. He talks a little bit of mess, gets you going. I just love Cam. I love competing against Cam. It's been an honor to be his teammate.

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