

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

Monday, January 2, 2023

Pasadena, California, USA

## Utah Utes

## Coach Kyle Whittingham

## Karene Reid

## Devaughn Vele

### Postgame Press Conference

Penn State 35, Utah 21

THE MODERATOR: Coach Whittingham will give an opening remark and then we'll open up the floor for questions.

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Disappointing loss. Credit Penn State. They're a complete football team, played well.

Really made very few mistakes.

When you look at us and our issues in this game, didn't throw the ball efficiently enough, not nearly as efficiently as we've been throwing it all season long.

Defense got big played. That's evidenced by over 400 yards of offense by Penn State. Only 15 first downs, that's not a lot of first downs which means they're getting some big-chunk-yardage plays, which definitely led to our demise.

Minus-2 in the turnover margin. It's tough to win when you're minus-2 there.

A lot of things that we needed to do better, but again, Penn State, give them credit. They played well. Quarterback was exceptional. High completion percentage, threw for a bunch of yards, ran the ball efficiently enough.

We did a decent job running the ball, as well, but like I said, our lack of production throwing the football was really off the pace tonight.

Our guys played hard, though. Proud of them. We just have to keep coming back to this game until we get it right. Took us three times in the Pac-12 Championship before we got the win, so we've got to make sure that we try to continue to get better -- I know the landscape is changing.



The Rose Bowl is not going to be in the traditional spot, but whatever New Year's Six bowl we can get back to, we've got to figure that out, or the CFP, one of the two.

Love the team that we've got coming back next year. Got a lot of talented players, and looking forward to working with them.

A lot of positives this season. Back-to-back Pac-12 championships, 10-win seasons. Only been done, I believe, six or seven times in the program's history, and second appearance in the Rose Bowl.

As disappointed as we are and as bitter as this is, still a lot to build on, and definitely the season overall was a step in the right direction for our program. We've got to continue that.

That's where we're at.

**Q. Kyle, two-part question. Are you able to say what the injury is to Cam, and did you ever consider putting in Nate?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: The injury to Cam is a leg injury. It doesn't look good; I can tell you that. We'll wait for confirmation from the medical people at a later date, either tonight or tomorrow. Looks like it could be something that takes a while to recover from. That's not positive right now.

What was the second particulate of your question? Nate?

Bryson had been taking all the reps with the twos. Nate had a few plays in a package for him that we just didn't get to tonight, and so Bryson was the guy we felt like gave us, at least tonight, the best chance to move the football.

**Q. Hard-fought game, especially in that first half. Following up on Cam, how hard was it to see him go down once again?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Yeah, breaks my heart. He's such a warrior and such a fierce competitor. He'll be back; I can promise you that, from the injury. Hopefully he's back with us. That's to be determined.



But he'll work his way back.

It almost seemed we lost a little bit of our mojo when that happened. We had a little bit of a deflation on our team, and that's not the right way to respond. We needed to respond better than we did, and it's unfortunate that we didn't -- that we had the dropoff that we did.

**Q. You told me in the pre-game press conference, your confident in the tight ends, they weren't really involved that much in the passing game. Can you explain that?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Well, we did drop a couple passes at the tight end position, but Dalton Kincaid, is in my opinion, he's the best receiving tight end in the nation, so tough to replicate what he brings to the offense. Brant Kuithe has been gone several weeks, same thing, but Thomas, Taniela, Logan Kendall, they were not big factors tonight, but it wasn't just them. Like I said, the entire throw game as a whole was just not what it needed to be. As coaches we've got to coach it better and put them in better position to get better production there.

**Q. On those two big plays that Penn State had offensively, what did you see on that, and is it difficult at all for a defense when they give up those two big plays to really stay positive the rest of the game?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: What was the primary question?

**Q. What did you see on those two big plays.**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Yeah, we got cut out of a gap on the big run. It was a defense where we committed essentially everybody but the corners who were in coverage to the box, and one of our up-front guys got cut out by their tight end. Tight end did a great job, if you watch the replay, our defensive guy is looking over to the sideline to see if we're going to be changing the call. They snapped the ball when his head was to the sideline, which didn't allow him to get a very good opportunity to play the block scheme, so that was the issue there.

The other play, the long pass was a double move. It was cover-two structure, and safety just got a little bit too aggressive on the first slant move and went right by us and was -- 60, 70-yard play. The run was 80, 85 yards. Those two plays there were very damaging.

We've just got to coach them better, like I said.

**Q. Coach, did Penn State's physicality bother you at all?**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: No, I felt we matched their physicality. I don't think that was a problem. That's evidence the in the run game. They did a decent job running the ball, as we did. I don't think that was something that was a factor in the game. It was mistakes by our defense at critical times and big plays, like I said, which we typically don't give up. We're usually very good keeping things in front of us and not giving up big plays, as evidenced by our No. 1 ranking in the Pac-12 in defense this year.

But tonight just weren't good enough limiting big plays by the opponent.

**Q. Karene and Devaughn, disappointment of the game aside, these two years that Utah has been in the Rose Bowl and being able to play in this game, and as Coach alluded to, kind of the landscape is changing, is there anything that you take away from I guess the appreciation of being able to play on this stage?**

KARENE REID: Yeah, I mean, we're obviously grateful to have made it to the Rose Bowl for the second year in a row. Like Coach Whitt said, there's a lot of positive from the season and the season before. But it's definitely disappointing the way it ended this year.

DEVAUGHN VELE: Yeah, I agree with Karene. Going back-to-back Rose Bowls, not a lot of people say they can do that, but at the same time we wish we would have executed better to come out as Rose Bowl champions. It doesn't matter how many times you come to the Rose Bowl, it's better when you win one, so we could come 100 times. If we don't win one, it doesn't really mean that much. I feel like execution-wise we could have done better, but it's credit to Penn State, they played a really good game, and we're just going to get back to the drawing board and start preparing for next season.

**Q. Devaughn, what was the message in the huddle when Cam went down with this offense?**

DEVAUGHN VELE: I felt like this message was the same thing we said last year when Cam went down in the fourth quarter. Bryson came in and we said we're trusting you, you're going to be our leader, you're going to lead us in the offense and we're going to give everything we can. And a lot of people were even saying the same thing like we're doing this for Cam, we're doing this for the fans, and we just went in and made sure that we kept our heads up.

As Coach said, the morale kind of was deflated a little bit when we saw our captain go down. But I give credit to Bryson. He kept his head in it. He kept trying to pick us up

even when everybody was kind of down, trying to lead us and trying to get something to go.

**Q. Kyle, tell us how much you think the loss of Clark Phillips maybe hurt.**

KYLE WHITTINGHAM: Oh, Clark is a tremendous player. Certainly would have helped to have him back there in the secondary. But he wasn't there, so like I said, it's next man up mentality. We missed him, but he's got a bright future ahead of him at the next level, and we wish him all the best, and he gave us so much while he was here during his time at Utah, and we appreciate everything he did for our program, and like I said, you're going to be watching him for years to come in my opinion.

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