

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Sunday, December 3, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Jim Harbaugh

Press Conference

JIM HARBAUGH: We are thrilled to be playing in the CFP final at the Rose Bowl Game. Thank you.

Q. Coach, I'm not sure if you've had a chance to look at the journey that Alabama has had so far, but with the quarterback Jalen Milroe, what can you say about him overcoming adversity and the way he's playing right now, especially down the stretch?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, he's playing at an elite level, and you can see the improvement throughout the season. Just really seems like he hit an inflection point there right before the halfway mark. Got also a special set of athletic skills.

But as far as like timing, decision-making, accuracy, he's playing really well within the system. They've designed some great stuff for him.

We have a similar quarterback, so we just have noticed the level he's playing at. He's elite.

Q. Speaking of Milroe, the connection he's had with Isaiah Bond, what have you seen from afar of the connection those two have had recently and what you guys will have to defend?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, you're right, I can't talk too much to that connection. Just really what I've seen in some of the games that I've watched. Yeah, he hate to talk too much into it and pretend like I know something I really don't. Just really been able to look through the keyhole, but it really looks good.

As I said, the precision in the passing game has been noticeable. The improvement to where it's at now is at an elite level.

Q. A lot of us saw the reaction of the team when they saw that they were playing Alabama. What can you tell us about who you thought you would be playing and



what it is about Alabama that maybe your players aren't so excited to face?

JIM HARBAUGH: No, we're excited to face them. It's iconic. It's Alabama. It's Roll Tide. It's doesn't get any better, to be playing in the Rose Bowl, also the -- just going to appreciate the tradition of the Rose Bowl, playing a great team like Alabama. I mean, it always has meaning.

What we did was special. Not only yesterday but the entire season, the whole group that we have. We're thrilled. We're thrilled to be where we're at. We're thrilled to be playing Alabama, thrilled to be playing in the Rose Bowl because it's going to be competition. That's what this team lives for.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the "Beat Georgia" drill. How much do you think that is applicable to Alabama? How much do you feel like you guys are prepared to face a team with this kind of defense and front seven?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, it's really -- what is it, the last maybe five weeks, probably the last four, I think we played some of the top defenses in the country in Penn State, Iowa, Ohio State, all top 5 defenses, and Alabama is as good as all them or better.

Yeah, it'll be a big challenge, big task.

Q. I'd be interested to know, you've got a month to prepare for Alabama. How much does having that extra three weeks help you with preparation than just going week in and week out prepping quickly?

JIM HARBAUGH: I think the most beneficial part is getting healthy and getting the team back fresh and healthy and ready to roll.

Q. I know you met Alabama a couple years ago in the Citrus Bowl. I know you've known Nick Saban for a long time. Could you talk about your relationship with him and how that's grown and getting a chance to meet him in a game the stature of the Rose Bowl?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I mean, the kind of stuff you hope



for, you work for, you're playing for. To be in that position, nothing but the highest respect for Coach Saban. He's always treated us with respect, and going back to when the first -- I guess the first time I met him was when Michigan State was playing in the -- Michigan State or Marquette at a Final Four in New Orleans. I think it was Marquette when Tom Crean was coaching there and he was at the game and we had a chance to have a conversation. Also a couple of the Heisman Trophy awards ceremonies when our players have been invited, whether it was at Stanford or Michigan.

Super interesting to talk to, and yeah, we're going against the best. Tradition is -- two true blue bloods of football, facing Alabama.

Q. With it being the last year of the traditional Big Ten and the last year of the four-team playoff era, talk about what it means for you to be the Big Ten representative going to the Rose Bowl as the No. 1 overall seed.

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, just as you would expect. Just a great thrill of victory, wonderful, wonderful feeling of winning. It's what we dreamed about, what we hoped for, what we've worked for, what our guys prepared for.

Get in position; put yourself in position, to be in position to win it all.

We've accomplished many of our goals, and now winning it all is what we had also put on the goal sheet. That's what we'll turn our one-track mind to, to this next opponent and playing Alabama in the Final Four, and we'll do what we always do. We'll play, we'll prepare, we'll practice, and get ready to give it our very best.

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