

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

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## Michigan Wolverines

### Jesse Minter

#### Press Conference

#### Q. What are some of the coaching points of your defense about facing Jalen Milroe?

JESSE MINTER: It's really an 11 on 1 mentality. He's capable of every play, not only playing the first play and having to defend the first play but also like what we call the second play.

His ability when he drops back to, one, scramble to throw the ball really, really far downfield or to dump the ball off to the speed guys, but also his ability to take the ball himself.

It's 11 on 1. We've got to do a great job up front with our rush lanes and integrity of that, but at the same time, our guys have to go play fast. I think there's times where you can over-coach those guys of sitting there waiting to see what he's going to do, and then there's times where you've got to let those guys roll, maybe have somebody else there if they screw it up.

But I'm looking forward to our guys facing that challenge and confident in our players' ability to go out there and have some success.

#### Q. Have you showed them clips of Lamar Jackson, and how do you compare him to Lamar as a runner?

JESSE MINTER: They're their own players, so Lamar certainly was electric in college, Heisman winner, could do it all, NFL MVP. That this year maybe on pace for his second MVP how he's playing.

Jalen is a first-year starter who is playing at a super high level, playing with a lot of confidence, has the ability to really throw the deep ball well, has the ability to make those second plays and take the ball to the house.

I do think both of their abilities as scramblers, there's some similarities in their ability to drop back, nothing is there, take off, and then once they take off, it's like Reggie Bush



running the ball.

It's not like a quarterback that's scrambling and he's going to slide and make sure you don't hit him so you don't get a penalty. This dude is going to run like a legit tailback or like a legit slot receiver once he's in space.

I think that's the biggest difference in both of those guys, how they -- once they run, they become like a bona fide weapon.

I think that's the comparison. But like I said, they're their own guys. Jalen is having a phenomenal season, probably has a bright future at the next level, as well, with his skill set, and probably could do some similar things to Lamar.

But Lamar is one of one who's about to be a two-time MVP and a Heisman winner. Both those guys are exciting to watch.

#### Q. With Alex giving you the look for Jalen in practice, what are you instructing him as a thrower? Are you trying to tell him to throw it out of the stadium, things like that?

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, there's times where the ball is 60, 65, 70 yards downfield, so we're trying to get that look as much as we can for our guys to have a sense of finding the ball, being able to track the ball all the way down.

I think there's times when you play certain quarterbacks or certain receivers where you know 40, 50 yards downfield they're going to stop, they're going to start coming back.

These guys are going to keep running, and he has the ability to chuck it down there. Alex has a great skill set in his own right. I think he's got a bright future as a quarterback.

He's done a really good job. It's hard to simulate a guy like Jalen Milroe. Alex has a unique skill set that we can try to simulate him, but to say we can simulate him to a tee is probably not fair to him and how well he's played this year.

But Alex has done a great job trying to give us the best



look.

**Q. What was behind the beat Georgia drill, and when did you guys start doing it? And is it just translatable easily to Alabama when you do that?**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, I think everything that we do, sort of there's always purpose or maybe a little bit of motivation behind, so I think it was in the spring, hey, we're going to do a beat Georgia drill, which is really just about trench game, the line of scrimmage and playing 11-on-11 football, and being able to know a team is going to run the ball and can you stop the run, knowing a team is lining up to stop the run, can you run the ball. I do think it translates.

Over the last 10 years, four years ago probably would have been called the beat Alabama drill, and just because Georgia had won the last two, that was the team -- obviously you're always gunning for that team, but you know when you go into the year that anything can happen.

I sort of put those two together. They're kind of built from the same cloth, they play the same style, and you know what you're going to get when you play one of those teams. You're going to get great defense, you're going to get great play at the line of scrimmage, you're going to get complementary football that the offense is going to play to the defense and vice versa.

And then you give them a month to prepare, you're going to see some things that maybe you're not ready for or that they hope you're not ready for, and so we look forward to the challenge, and nothing but utmost respect for Coach Saban and how he's had success in the playoffs and really look forward to the challenge.

**Q. What's the biggest difference from Alabama over maybe the last month and early in the season when you're looking back at film?**

JESSE MINTER: I think anytime you've got a first-year starter at quarterback, you kind of find as you go what they do really well, no different than if you have a first-year starter at safety and you're trying to figure out the things that maybe he does best.

As they've gone, tailored the offense to his skill set, his ability to throw the ball downfield, his ability to make those plays, his ability to get involved in the run game, I think in key moments this year they get him involved in the run game when they need to, and that's their ability to create an extra hat in the run game.

It shows up in big moments and big games. Expect to see it.

But I just think he's got more comfortable as he's played more, Coach Rees as has gotten to Alabama, got a new school, got all his new pieces, gotten really comfortable with what he has, and then I think they've -- earlier in the year he might have turned the ball over a few more times.

I know it's like 28 to 1 over the last -- his touchdown interception ratio recently, so he's done a great job taking care of the ball. They've run the ball well. They've helped their O-line a little bit more in certain situations. Yeah, just done a great job getting better as an offense, which is what you want to do. You want to get better as the year goes.

I think they're a test of that, and they've peaked at the right time and played really well against Georgia when it mattered most.

**Q. When you mentioned the month off and maybe expecting to see some things that you haven't seen before, how much do coaches twist themselves in knots trying to anticipate something that's not on film, and can you get to a point where you're overthinking it?**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, you definitely can. I think as coaches you want to try to be prepared for everything, but you want to be careful with your players of trying to prepare them for too much.

You want to say, hey, this is the core of their offense is this. They may formation it different, may try to hide it, may motion differently, but at the end of the day these are the plays, these are the routes that they kind of hang their hat on, that they're really good at.

You're probably going to do the things you've been really good at. We want to do the same thing. We want to do the things that we have been good at and not overthink it, not think we got to out in a whole new defense.

And so at the end of the day, I treat it kind of like an opener where you know a team has had all year to prepare, you've had all year to prepare, you've probably tweaked a little bit; but at the same time, we stand on our foundation as a defense on the things that we've done well, and we look forward to seeing if that's good enough on Monday.

**Q. During the off-season what was your biggest push or impetus in putting the four pillars in?**

JESSE MINTER: The end of the season last year, even though we won the Ohio State game last year, the Purdue game, and then certainly didn't win the TCU game, on the plane ride back from the TCU game, sort of wrote down

some things that just thought as I was watching the tape really disappointed in, and looked at myself, not looking at the players, but looking at myself of how did we prepare, did we take the right angles to the ball, are we playing like our hair is on fire, were we doing too much, were we not doing enough, were we going after the football at times that that was there, were we communicating at a level we needed to.

So really just self-reflection of things I didn't think we did great towards the latter part of the season and kind of put it together. The coaches really bought into it, sort of made it a way bigger emphasis this year. The coaches have done a tremendous job with it, the players are really bought into it, been a huge part of our success, and I think playing defense, it's controlling the things you can control and particularly not even scheme related.

The scheme is -- that's my job, is to try to put the players in the best position to be successful, but if we can have those guys playing at a fundamental level just at a football level that allows us to play at our best, a lot of times you can overcome a bad call if you play that way.

I really appreciate the guys, how much they've bought into it, how much the coaches have put into it, and it was all for this. So I look forward to hopefully seeing it pay off on Monday.

**Q. You reflected on the TCU loss last year, what bothered you most?**

JESSE MINTER: I looked at some calls that I definitely wanted back, but also just kind of how we played. I thought there was times we took bad angles. Fundamentally there were some things at the line of scrimmage that I didn't think we did great. Looked back at our preparation and things that maybe we didn't make a big enough emphasis as we were preparing.

Once again, you lose, you learn, you try to get better from it. Then eventually you look back and say, man, I'm glad that happened, even though at the time it's a terrible feeling and you disappoint a lot of people and you disappoint yourself more than anybody.

But eventually any adversity is an opportunity to grow, an opportunity to get better. I think if you sit there and say, hey, we were 13-1, let's just run it back, it worked out pretty good, then you set yourself up for disappointment.

Try to evolve, try to do things to get better. I definitely think there's a lot of areas that we've played better because of that, and once again, just major props and appreciation to the players for them buying into that and believing in the

emphasis and working at it, and it's showed up.

**Q. A few minutes ago Mason Graham mentioned how the Penn State feels might be most similar to this Alabama game. Is there a game that you look to and think, that could be pretty comparable to what we're about to do?**

JESSE MINTER: I really don't, for this year. I think what Mason said is probably true. I think there's elements of different teams for each position. You obviously look at like a receiving corps with speed, you think about Ohio State and their talent level back there, you look at a quarterback -- we haven't played a quarterback like Jalen Milroe.

We haven't played an offensive line this big and physical. Penn State had a good O-line. Ohio State played well at times on the O-line. But we haven't played an O-line like this.

Yeah, I don't think there's anybody we've played. I think you trust that the long course of preparation that began last January has you prepared to play a team like this, and the most comparable team is probably our own team and a team that we get to practice against all the time.

That's probably in my opinion -- a physical, downhill running game, offensive line that has the ability to move people, various, various schemes in the run game. At sometimes the ability to run the quarterbacks, particularly all the different quarterbacks we have on our roster.

I think in certain elements, it's our own offense and the quarterbacks' ability to extend and make plays and scramble and do those certain things.

Once again, you hope all those spring practices, all those training camp practices, all the times we do good-on-good, you do it for these moments right here when you're playing against an elite team like Alabama.

**Q. Where does just embracing the challenge of playing Alabama fit into that mix? Obviously when people see that, it's just different. It's different than most teams you play.**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, I think as a defensive coach coming up, Nick Saban is the guy, right? He's the defensive guy that became a head coach that has been successful at every level, that is sort of -- has sort of rewrote college record books over his career, LSU, even Michigan State did a good job and then LSU, Alabama.

So yeah, I think there's an automatic like respect for that,

but at the same time, you embrace the challenge. You embrace the opportunity that's there. Like it's an opportunity to play against the college team over the last 15 years, the team that's won all those national titles and been in these situations a bunch.

I think for us, for our guys, the disappointment creates a mindset that this is the opportunity you want, and let's embrace it. Like I said, let's hope those practice moments prepared us and go out on Monday and see where we're at.

**Q. With Alabama, one of the things that they've done or Nick Saban has done so well is changed his system as the game changes and changed his system to whatever players he has on the roster. When you think about scheming against a coach like that, why is that difficult when you have someone that is so flexible like he is?**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, I think a sign of a great coach is fitting what you do to your personnel, not the other way around.

I think you have a system and you have core foundational beliefs of how you think winning football is played, which Coach Saban has, but then you take the pieces that you have and you try to maximize each piece and utilize everybody different.

They've had Mac Jones at quarterback where you're going to drop back and throw it a lot and he's an elite thrower and elite skill, now you've got a guy that can run and do both. They've had Heisman Trophy tailbacks there. They've had all these offensive linemen. They've had every different position, they've had guys, Heisman winner at receiver. Much credit, much respect to him for being able to do that.

I think you see the foundational pieces of their offense on tape even when you look back at years past, games, and you really just try to say, hey, this is this guy's skill set, maybe these are the things they're going to do, and then you try to do the same thing for us. You've got to have the ability to adjust, got to be able to make on the fly adjustments against guys like that where maybe they throw something completely new at you.

But our guys have a lot of trust in each other, have a lot of trust in the backbone of our defensive system to hopefully be able to adapt and adjust and handle anything they throw at us.

**Q. As a coach, how hard is it to actually adjust when it comes to the time of the game because you probably have instincts that got you where you are and you**

**trust those, but when you realize what I did was wrong, I'm going to pivot, how difficult is it to do that?**

JESSE MINTER: It's certainly challenging, but when you have players that understand the foundational pieces of your defense and you're not putting in a new defense week to week, I do think there's a lot of people that change things so much week to week that then when you end up in a game like that, it's hard to pivot.

I think for us, we stand on our foundation. We feel like we've got enough in our closet if we need to open the door and pull out something that we haven't done that our guys know -- we try to rep things all the time against our own offense, and so have confidence in our staff's ability, our players' ability, my own ability to make adjustments when needed.

**Q. How much did coaching on John's staff for four years of being in the pros prepare you for being a coordinator with Jim and coming back to college?**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, there's no better way to prepare for that. That was like -- I feel like I have kind of been -- had kind of gotten my degree and I was like a lower level D-coordinator trying to figure it out on my own.

Going there was like, hey, I'm going to go back to school, go back to college and go back and get my masters or my doctorate or whatever you want to call it and learn from the greatest minds in football.

At the time, I don't know Dean Pees, Wink Martindale, Chris Hewitt, Mike McDonald, John Harbaugh, Greg Roman, kind of the things he was doing on our offense. Just a master class of learning, trying to help where I could, trying to help rebuild the defense in my time there with Wink and Mike, and we had great success, and it was fun to be a part of.

Then kind of to learn John's culture and how he cultivated a team, cultivated a locker room. Thought there would be some similarities with Jim, and I think there are. They are two of the elite leaders in sports. Their ability to bring people together, their ability to have their players believe in their message and stay consistent, there's a reason both of them have won everywhere they've been.

Of course John has been a head coach there for a long time, but him and Mike Tomlin are the both -- Bill Belichick, the consistency that their teams, even in years where they lose guys, they have injuries, they're always going to find a way to be good.

It's their ability to cultivate the team, cultivate the locker





room, keep the belief high, get the guys to play team football even within their own personality, and I think that's a special trait of both of them is guys have the ability to be themselves but everybody guys into the team, as well.

It's not like that everywhere, and it's special to be a part of with the Harbaughs.

**Q. You were asked about working with your dad earlier. Are there certain aspects of the game you've gone to him for over the years?**

JESSE MINTER: As I was coming out of college, my first job was with him. I was an intern. That's really where -- I knew I wanted to coach probably real young, knew I wanted to coach, but that was where I really learned how his mind worked as a defensive person, defensive play caller, kind of how to try to attack people, learned a lot about tendencies. I think he's always been ahead of the game all the way back to in the '80s of how he was trying to attack people.

So that was like my first indoctrination into that, and then we kind of learned a system or he kind of put me learning a system of his and then once I had the ability to go to Baltimore then it kind of became intertwined with what we did there, kind of what he had done, which there was a lot of similarities because his stuff had evolved over the years.

Yeah, just the foundation of defensive football sort of how to look at an offense, how to look at tendencies, how to look at people, and try to figure out the best way to stop them.

**Q. What was your one year at Vanderbilt like?**

JESSE MINTER: It was a great experience. So much respect for Clark Lee. It was a startup program in a sense. In 2020, the COVID year, I believe, they led the country in opt-outs, so there was a culture that needed to be kind of rebuilt there. I think Clark has done a phenomenal job building that up.

It was, hey, year one of a place coming off of a winless season, so a lot of good times, struggles, great learning experience, particularly being in the SEC, kind of seeing how all those teams operate, some of the schematics back in college after being in the NFL for four years.

So sort of gave me a yearly way of, hey, these are maybe some of the trends in college, these are some of the trends that are different than the NFL that I think really helped prepare me to come to Michigan and be better than I would have been had I come straight back here from Baltimore.

**Q. What was it like working with your dad but also seeing the staffs he built, Mike, John Rossberg? It eventually was like a who's who of assistants or head coaches.**

JESSE MINTER: Yeah, a lot of those guys are really -- obviously my dad, as well, but why I wanted to get into coaching, I think I was 15 when I met Mike Tomlin.

It sounds -- it's easy to say now, but you knew then how special that guy was, and a lot of the guys, John Harbaugh, Jerry Rossberg, all those guys, Rex Ryan, kind of his mentality on defense. Just getting a chance to see that at a very formative age for myself of kind of what coaches are supposed to be like -- they're all different, and I think I probably learned as much as anything that you can be different. You can be yourself.

Like there's not a cookie cutter approach to coaching. Rex Ryan has his own personality. John Harbaugh has his own personality. Mike Tomlin has own personality.

So the ability to see that, I do think my dad had a pretty good knack of picking out good coaches. I think he still does. He's always sort of been able to pinpoint that guy is a rising star or has a really bright future.

Yeah, it's definitely been fun to be able to see those guys growing up and then have them as resources now, having the ability to stay in touch with them.

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