

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Thursday, December 28, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Michael Barrett

Press Conference

Q. You mentioned Coach Harbaugh and his pleats. What would be your fit if you were a coach?

MICHAEL BARRETT: What would be my fit? Like pregame or just kind of walking around?

Q. Whatever.

MICHAEL BARRETT: If I was a coach, I would say probably some slacks. I would go with a slack and a button down, honestly. Probably a hat. I'd probably be more laid back honestly. Probably sweats and a hoodie. I probably wouldn't do the khakis like Coach Harbaugh. I definitely might throw a hat on.

Q. What do you think about this talk about the SEC, Alabama's speed, being able to contend with that?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I think it's he said/she said. In the past, Alabama, they've had their success, and that's kind of what they've stood on just their size, their speed, their strength. But you can find that anywhere.

I'm from Georgia, so you know I kind of grew up around all of that, grew up around SEC, watching Florida, watching Georgia, Alabama, teams like that. I feel like it's he said/she said. I feel like you really won't know until we're out there on the field together until we line it up.

Q. Did you grow up a Georgia fan?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I grew up a Florida fan. I hated Alabama and Georgia my whole life. It's one of those.

Q. What do you remember about the first years you were watching this?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I want to say like -- I don't even know, like '07, '08. I was watching like back then -- that was before Tebow. Or was that during Tebow?



Q. I think he was there in '07.

MICHAEL BARRETT: I lived probably an hour from Gainesville, hour and a half from Gainesville. Me and my dad used to drive down to the games all the time, drive down to the campus and things like that.

Q. Did that make you want to be a quarterback?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I honestly don't even know kind of where that came from. It probably came from watching Tebow growing up honestly. I kind of always wanted the ball in my hands or always wanted to make an impact in some way. That's where being a quarterback kind of came from.

I knew the quarterback always had to touch the ball first. So that's where that kind of thrived from honestly.

Q. Michael, can you go back to almost a year ago, just when you were making a decision to come back rather than go to the NFL. How much of a factor does -- when you came to Michigan, there was no such thing as NIL, and now that you can make -- it's not -- the gap isn't so big anymore, what sort of factor did that play?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I felt like it played a little factor, not as much as it might have done to other guys. I feel like my NIL award wasn't as big as others coming out of last year.

But, yeah, it definitely makes it a little easier to make that decision to come back when you're still kind of getting some kind of money for it or some kind of compensation.

Personally, I feel like it didn't really make that big of a difference in my decision. I kind of thought about it. It was like a thought. But I knew that there really wasn't on top of my mind actually.

Q. What sort of feedback did you get on kind of when you might be drafted?

MICHAEL BARRETT: From last year? I was hearing a lot of -- I heard he could go in the sixth round, but a lot of



undrafted for the most part. A lot of scouts were telling me I'd probably go undrafted, be like a priority free agent and things like that.

I've just always had that dream of getting my name called on that day, and that's probably one of the biggest reasons why I came back, just to -- I knew that I was going to be able to kind of up my stock. I knew that I really didn't have the opportunities to kind of show what I could do fully.

With all of my position changes and coaches changes and things like that that's gone on throughout my career here, I just knew that coming back and having a full year at linebacker, I could really put my name out there and kind of show what I could do.

Q. Get more film and more development?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Right.

Q. Did the One More Year Fund, did they have any -- did they help you out?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah. I think it's the Champions Circle or the One More Year Fund thing. I'm not sure how it kind of goes about it. They like went into -- I'm not sure what all they've done, but they helped all the guys that kind of came back with a little NIL thing.

Q. There's been some teams that seem to have been impacted by it in a negative way. You guys have obviously made it here and it hasn't hurt you guys. How do you think your team has been able to navigate this current world of NIL and transfer portal to be as cohesive as you guys are?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, just finding guys who really aren't about the money honestly. Just finding guys who just love to play football, finding guys who are really about the team, have that team mindset, and are going to play for each other.

When it gets to a job honestly, that's when kind of the love for the game kind of goes away, all the trust kind of goes away, and like that's when you lose a team. That team aspect, honestly, when everything's about money or about when he's getting this amount or I'm getting this amount, you kind of throw all of that out and just kind of play for the guy next to you, that's kind of when you have like a team.

Q. Have you seen that happen to guys you know at other schools or guys you played against in high school? Like they've told you that can happen in their teams?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah. I know people who are leaving just because they aren't getting as much as somebody else or people with transfers so they can get some more money when it probably isn't the best fit for them just to go somewhere and not even play. I've seen that happen a lot of times with guys thinking they're just going to leave and go get paid. It's a worse situation than they left from.

So I feel like it's hurting a lot of guys, but we're only at the beginning of it. I feel like it's only going to get worse from here until they kind of just put some kind of -- I feel like it's still kind of in the air with everything that's kind of going on with what you can and can't do or how much you can do, things like that.

We'll see how things go.

Q. Harbaugh has been pretty outspoken about how there should be revenue share for the players. Is that something you guys like and you guys talk about, how Harbaugh's been pretty open about that?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, he's a coaches' coach -- I mean players' coach (laughter). Coaches' coach too definitely, but he's definitely a players' coach. He's always going to fight for his guys.

He lets us know that with all of everything that we do kind of year long and year round, he knows that we should get something for it. Everyone agrees with just the amount of revenue that the players bring to a university just in a year of playing college football and not being -- not paying them at all, I feel like is just crazy honestly.

So I feel like, yeah, him speaking up for us, being a voice for all the guys is great to see.

Q. Are there some moments that stick in your mind of when you saw with your own eyes kind of like how much money Michigan football generates?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I mean I still haven't seen. I kind of guesstimate. But I probably couldn't even wrap my head around how much money we bring in yearly, with just all of the facilities and stuff we have, all of the hundreds of thousands of people that show up in Ann Arbor every week.

I honestly probably couldn't even wrap my head around the kind of money they bring in monthly, daily, yearly, I don't even know.

Q. When recruits are coming in, how much does that -- do questions of NIL get asked?

MICHAEL BARRETT: From me, I haven't heard. I can't even think --

Q. To you from them.

MICHAEL BARRETT: I can't even think of a time I've really talked about kind of the NIL with like recruits. I know there's a question that some of the guys get, but I can't think of a time where they've asked me about NIL, what's the NIL thing going on.

I'm sure it's a thing. I'm sure it's a topic for sure.

Q. In practice with Alex giving you the look for Jalen Milroe, has he done anything particularly freaky with the ball in his hands or thrown the ball particularly deep to give you guys a look?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Just taking off running when we think he's going to scramble. Keeping his eye downfield, making all the deep passes, making everyone stay in coverage while also being ready for him to take off running, things like that.

He has that athletic ability like Jalen. He can move around in the pocket, he can run around. So just having him give us that look I feel has been really good for the past month.

Q. For you as a linebacker, what is the challenge for you? You're not rushing all the time? How do you kind of work through the conflict of whether he's going to take off or trying to diagnose that when you're not in coverage?

MICHAEL BARRETT: You've got to just sit one step at a time. Usually when I'm not in coverage, like I was saying earlier, it's not really sitting back and waiting on him to make his move because at that point you're already a step behind. It's kind of taking the aggression to him, taking it to him, and that's with like our pass rush, that's with like our coverage.

Just covering on the back end, making him sit back there in the pocket, forcing him to sit back there in the pocket, don't let him move around. We know he's going to scramble, he's going to get his few yards, but just try to eliminate that as much as possible, get him on the ground as fast as possible. Yeah, just try not to let up any big plays from him on his feet.

Q. Has Coach Minter showed you film of Lamar Jackson or any other mobile quarterbacks?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, we've definitely heard the

Lamar comparison, just kind of watching how he move in the pocket, the different Q runs he does and things like that. It's a great comparison, honestly, just how he runs the ball, how he keeps his eyes down the field whenever he's scrambling.

We've watched some film of guys kind of taking away Lamar's run ability, forcing him to sit back there, throw the ball, and making bad decisions and things like that.

Q. When you guys have done your film prep, did you see -- was there a game or moment where you felt like Alabama's offense kind of flipped or evolved or even Jalen taking a step forward? Was there a turn for you guys when you saw Alabama's offense start to take off?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Not really. Actually, I would say they've done a good job of kind of eliminating the mistakes that they were making kind of the beginning of the year, but I feel like just I haven't really seen like just a flip of anything different than they were doing. I feel like they kind of changed their scheme a little to kind of match Jalen's abilities, things that he does well.

I feel like they just kind of did a better job of putting him in better situations to be successful, I would say.

Q. Is there a quarterback or an offense you've seen this year that compares to them, how they play?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, like I was saying, I would compare him, just his ability in the pocket, with like Taulia out of Maryland. I see their offense kind of as a mix of Ohio State and Penn State. That's kind of how I viewed it there.

But like I said, they're their own team. Everybody is going to come out different and attack us differently. They had this month to prepare just like we have, and we could probably come out and see something totally different. So just got to stay on our toes and be ready.

Q. A lot of questions about how you guys are going to stop -- how you'll stop Jalen Milroe, maybe not so much the other way around, and you're the No. 1 defense. Does that create a chip on your shoulder a little bit?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, I actually said it yesterday. I'm sitting here talking like the underdog, like we're not the No. 1 team in the country. I get it. It's 'Bama. It is what it is. Let everybody talk to the game. That's kind of how I see it.

Q. Kind of like the SEC is expected to win?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, the SEC, their fans. I kind of know how all that goes down there, just football down South. There's a lot more, I think, trash talk or just talk in general. I feel like just their -- I don't know. I don't want to say too much.

Q. You're also a very introspective person. I guess how much of it is the fact that you guys have lost the last two games at this stage, do you think?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, probably one of the biggest things honestly. They've had success here over the years, especially the SEC. They've had a lot of success on these stages over the years. The Big Ten hasn't.

So, yeah, they're just going off of what they can see, what they've seen in the past, and that's kind of all we can base this game off of. That's kind of where everybody is basing this game off of, kind of the past SEC, the past Big Ten, the past of what's happened.

I guess we're here now to kind of just show what's going on.

Q. That was true about Ohio State until 2021, right?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Right. Everybody kept telling me I wasn't going to be able to beat Ohio State. We never beat them, and here we are. The tide turns at some point.

Q. You had a big choice to make last year whether to come back or not. You've come back. You've had a successful year. What's the advice you'd give to someone like junior or other guys who are making that decision this off-season?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I'd say everybody's decision is their own. You have to do what -- I tell them guys all the time, it's really on you, what's best for you, best for your family. This is kind of your decision. Probably one of the biggest decisions you'll make in your life other than like your decision to come to Michigan.

So like take your time and pray about it, ask God about it, and don't try to rush it. Don't let anybody else really kind of hinder your judgment. Like it's all about you at this point. I can't really -- like I can't really try to steer him one or the other. It's kind of one of those grown man decisions that you have to end up making on your own.

Q. There was a video reaction after it was announced that you're playing Alabama, and a lot of people made a big deal about it. What went through your mind -- I

talked to some of your teammate, and they said that they were expecting Florida State.

MICHAEL BARRETT: It's funny that I keep hearing everybody say we're scared because we got 'Bama, and it was more like the shock of not seeing an undefeated Power 5 team get picked. We kind of figured that all the undefeated teams were going to come, and we were just debating on who would slip into that fourth spot.

So not seeing Florida State in there, it was kind of a shock to everybody. It wasn't really like fear, never that, of any team. It was just more that shock. We kind of just were already expecting, okay, if they got them at 3, then they've got to be Florida State at 4, things like that.

It's funny that I keep hearing about it like everybody is y'all were scared. I saw y'all in that video. Okay, it is what it is. Everybody's going to talk. Everybody's going to have their opinions. Yeah, it was just more shock of them leaving FSU out of the playoffs.

Q. Not that you're scared, but it is -- the situation with Jordan Travis, it probably would have been an easier matchup.

MICHAEL BARRETT: Definitely.

Q. Is that a little bit of a letdown when you're looking at it?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I feel like that probably was the biggest one. FSU, they're missing one of their best players. Who wouldn't want to play a team who was missing their starting quarterback for a chance to go to a National Championship Game?

Yeah, I feel like that's kind of what that shock was. Like, oh, dang, we probably could have caught them slipping or whatever, whatever. At the end of the day, we're here now. We have who we have, and we're about to go handle business.

Q. In the linebacker room, (indiscernible). Rick Minter obviously now you guys' coach. Could you speak to, now that you've had a full month with him, what have you seen? And then also Jesse, obviously you speak very glowingly of his dad. Do you see him also looking up to his dad, or what do you see in their relationship, and he was really talking about just the trust and how there's no one you can trust more.

MICHAEL BARRETT: Coach Rick, he just has that OG wisdom for real that he kind of brings throughout meetings and practice and kind of just any time we're kind of with

him. He gives us a lot of little points. He's seen a lot. He's coached a lot. He's played in and coached a lot of games. So whenever he talks, like everybody's listening.

A lot of people trust in what he says. A lot of people have that belief that he knows what he's talking about and everybody's listening and zoned in whenever he speaks.

Yeah, just kind of throughout this past month, just breaking down offenses more, breaking down the defense more. I feel like he just kind of goes into more detail about everything, just the whys behind everything, and I really love that because it helps you play faster when you know why you're doing something or why something's a certain way and how you really fit into a scheme and how offensive schemes work.

Yeah, I feel like it helps you play faster, play off stuff faster, and I feel like he's been a really good addition to the room.

Q. When you last played Alabama, Carlo didn't play in the game. But he was the starting defensive tackle, and then he was like at 280, and you've got a guy like Kenneth Grant who is starting against Iowa, he's 339. I'm just looking at how different the defense looks between the previous scheme and now, just from a size standpoint.

MICHAEL BARRETT: Yeah, crazy different. I feel like our D-line this year, they're definitely the best D-line in the country. We've got some freaks up front that definitely can hold their own and can definitely win their one-on-ones.

The turnaround team, we had a great D-line back then, but the guys we have now and the depth we have just kind of rolling through, I feel like -- that depth has probably been our biggest accomplishment this off-season, really just establishing that depth, just kind of throughout the defense on all levels and kind of just being able to have guys to go in and give guys a break that won't really have that fall off at all and can kind of play at the same high level as whoever was just in starting.

But, yeah, going into this game with this defense and this D-line, I feel like it's probably our best chance for real, best shot.

Q. You feel like it's better equipped to go up against an Alabama team with that kind of offensive line? Or that the D-line can hold its own against them?

MICHAEL BARRETT: Exactly. I feel like this defense is built for a team like this for sure.

Q. How much pride is on the line for the Big Ten

against the SEC?

MICHAEL BARRETT: I feel like it's a lot. Just with all the talk of SEC's bigger, faster, stronger, just kind of that he said/she said has been going around. I feel like that pride aspect is probably big right now with all of the SEC-Big Ten going back and forth, I feel like it's pretty big.

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