

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

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Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Junior Colson

Press Conference

Coach Moore took over as interim or acting coach. What did he show you in that period to make you see that this guy's got it?

JUNIOR COLSON: He's been able to show that through summer camp and all that stuff. Coach, he preps them to become head coaches one day. So during camp and those type of practices sometimes he would have the assistant coaches -- the DCs, OCs -- be the coach, be out there as the head coach. He's not calling it. He's just being a referee and everything else is up to them. And the way they put their players out there, the way they rotate and all those things, it's all up to them.

We've been able to see that quite a bit leading up to it. We trusted them. We knew what we had going into it. When his time came to shine he went out and did what we all expected him to go out there and do, which is dominate. We just put up some winning games.

Q. You see teams once in a while have two coaches, but not usually a successful team. When you're going through that, how do you kind of handle it?

JUNIOR COLSON: When you're going through that, it's just mostly trusting the guys to your right, trusting your guys to the left, trusting all the people that are in that locker room because at the end of the day I think that's who you had, who you spend 24/7 with, all times. And just being able to have trust in each other and believe in each other and just go out there and play ball knowing the guys, all the guys have their back, you have their back.

Q. We've now reached a point where you guys as an age group probably most of you don't remember like the Reggie Bush/Vince Young Rose Bowl. What's the Rose Bowl that jumps to mind for you, if you first remember?

JUNIOR COLSON: I never watched football growing up. I



never watched the Rose Bowl. I didn't focus on that. I was more like a soccer kid growing up.

But I've been able to learn about so much history this past couple of weeks. So much history. So much that goes into it. It means so much to a lot of these guys. Means so much to -- it's "The Granddaddy of Them All", that's what they call it.

It's been phenomenal to learn how much it means to them, and there's been some players from Michigan, a lot of players from Michigan who are in the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame, who set records in the Rose Bowl. It's been awesome to go out there in the next couple of days and put your name up there with them and see how it is.

Q. When did the transition from soccer to football kind of happen for you?

JUNIOR COLSON: I guess playing-wise, I was about 10 playing soccer. But growing didn't really watch sports other than soccer in a way. Still it was mostly soccer, but I played football.

Q. Last year, in the Fiesta Bowl, the grass surface was wet.

JUNIOR COLSON: Yeah.

Q. The team struggled a bit. Another grass surface.

JUNIOR COLSON: No excuse. That's our mentality, no excuses now. Oh, I slipped, that's why this happened or something like that. At the end of the day, make sure we're all out of excuses. We're all out of excuses. Every team is out of excuses.

Just gotta go out there and play and make sure you're prepared. Right now we're practicing on grass surfaces, every team (indiscernible) mostly practice on grass surface, so make sure you get proper cleats, proper things, proper tires to go out play your best football.

At the end of the day there's no excuses for, oh, I slipped or this thing happened or the surface was too wet.



Because at the end of the day both these teams are playing on the same surface.

Q. Trust me, you'll feel the difference. Like I remember I covered the Auburn-Oregon national title game. And they dropped the one field on top of the old field in Arizona. And I think they still do the same thing.

JUNIOR COLSON: Probably. It was a bad surface.

Q. They did the Super Bowl. It's always -- it's been 20 years and it's still the same crappy field. How much pride is on the line for the Big Ten against the SEC, the two conferences that are kind of battling for supremacy right now?

JUNIOR COLSON: Probably for the Big Ten. We don't really care about that, but it's pride for Michigan. It's pride for Michigan. We've come so far and gone through so much.

At the end of the day that's never been an excuse for us. At the end of the day we've just been focusing on our work on every team. That's what we're working on -- our work on every team, make sure we're prepared for every opportunity that may come, just prepare to take the opportunity, (indiscernible) wings and fly.

Q. How much does the loss to Georgia come up two years ago? Is that motivation at all?

JUNIOR COLSON: It's been motivation, losing to them, losing to TCU. Any type of loss we've had has been motivation. It's been -- the bounce-back has been better. We've always strived to be the best. To be the best, you've got to beat the best. Right now we're about to play the best.

Doesn't matter what you say about them and all that stuff. But their coaches brought them eight out of the last 10 times to the playoffs. At the end of the day you've just got to go out there and dominate.

Q. The top of the conference in the Big Ten (indiscernible) get through the season (indiscernible).

JUNIOR COLSON: It's a very tough conference, very tough conference. A lot of people don't truly believe how tough it is once you play in it. A lot of people have their own opinions, but once you've played in this type of conference, you can't really talk.

Q. Some of the guys earlier were talking about this season. You guys probably have a chip on your

shoulder. How does Coach Harbaugh factor into that? What about him makes him fuel that mentality?

JUNIOR COLSON: Coach, he says he doesn't hold grudges but he remembers. That's the way he lives. He doesn't hold grudges but he remembers everything. That's the way we all live by. We remember everything that's happened, everything media have said, anything anybody ever said, anything anybody's ever done.

We don't hold grudges but we remember. You've just got to go out there and especially the way we play. I wouldn't say it's a chip on our shoulders. It's just we know what we can do. We know what we can achieve. So being able to go out there and just put down the line, trust the guy next to you, put down the line because our coaches prepared us the right way, the right mentality that each player has. We all have the same mentality.

So to go out there and be the best, so that's basically the way we've been practicing, the way we've been preparing.

Q. Does he use those grudges, I guess, in some way? Does he call them out for you guys to use them as motivation in some way?

JUNIOR COLSON: If you talk to him, in a way, but not really because we all understand, we all see, we all see the news. He laughs about it, he has fun and all that stuff. We're all having fun. Football is meant to be fun, to be a fun sport. We're all having fun out there.

But at the end of the day you've got to go out there and dominate. Gotta go out there the way you practice and prep. When we're out there on the field it's 110 percent. When we go out there was it a good enough (indiscernible) that we got better today? Or did we take a step back, because you never stay the same.

Our mentality is to always get better. Doesn't matter if it's one little thing, but we're always stacking brick by brick. And that doesn't mean when we say stack brick by brick, doesn't mean -- oh, today I'm going to stack one more brick on top. I did it just yesterday. No, you're starting over again.

It's the same fundamentals, the way we practice. We practice the same day, same way every day. It's not changed since fall camp. It's been the same thing -- every day is the way still practicing. And we keep repeating it because at the end of the day we're stacking brick by brick. And you start from that small brick -- maybe I got to brick six today. I start from brick one, maybe I get to brick seven today. Keep going.

Q. His personality is unique. How does that play with players?

JUNIOR COLSON: We understand him. We understand him. He treats us all like his kids, his own kids, which at the end of the day we're one big family. We all love each other. We all trust each other and we want to play for him.

A lot of things players don't have, players who truly want to play for their head coach. That's what we all have here. We all trust in him. It doesn't matter if he's with us, but he's also with us with spirit.

Q. The fact he played at such a high level in college and NFL, does that help in a way that relates to you guys and mindset?

JUNIOR COLSON: It's huge. Him having been a player and being in our shoes at some point in his life. It's phenomenal to be able to take those little nuggets. Every time he drops a little nugget every day on us and just knowing he went through the same things we go through.

If you're going through a roadblock he went through the same roadblocks he went through certain time in his life. So having him be kind of like a cutting board in a way, like somebody you bounce ideas off of and something he always gives you something back, little nuggets back.

Q. How hard is it, though, to deal with offseason, these two last offseasons where you had the uncertainty whether you would be back and any thoughts about that in the January period?

JUNIOR COLSON: No, like he keeps it honest with us. That's one thing. He keeps it honest. He tells us all of his thoughts. If he's meeting with the team, he tells us. Or if he's, hey, I'm with you guys throughout the year, he tells us.

One thing, he's a man of his words. Everything he say we always trust in him and believe in him. He's never going to go back on his word. Those things never faze us. At the end of the day we know we will get our answer from him. He will tell us at some point. He's not going to hide it and we'll find it from the media.

Q. Is that something you have to communicate to the younger players to reassure them?

JUNIOR COLSON: He's able to communicate that to them, too. Like one thing, he keeps it honest with you from day one. It's not like, oh, eventually when you get to the older guys you'll know everything that's happening with me. At the end of the day, everybody learns the same

information at the same time.

Q. Obviously especially nowadays, people get pulled (inaudible) pretty easily, the player standpoint, the portal, is that something even as older players you feel obligated to tell them, okay, just be patient here?

JUNIOR COLSON: No. Like at the end of the day those who stay will be champions. So if they stay, they trust in the team, trust in the process, if they don't, I wish all the best luck to them but at the end of the day maybe didn't put as much work in as you can because the grass is not always greener on the other side. Gotta go out there and those who stay will be champions, that's all I can say.

Q. How much pain are you playing in?

JUNIOR COLSON: I have a pain tolerance. I don't really know because you can never really -- you've got to go out and play ball. Especially once you start playing ball, having fun with it, everything kind of goes to the back of your mind. You just go out there and play.

Q. Your left hand is pretty heavily -- what exactly is the...

JUNIOR COLSON: I broke the fourth metacarpal in my hand, and the right, some issues there.

Q. When did you break it?

JUNIOR COLSON: I broke it Purdue game. I'm able to play. I still finished the Purdue game. Broke it in the same quarter, broke it.

Q. A tackle?

JUNIOR COLSON: It was during a tackle. It was more like a big pile. And next thing...

Q. How do you finish a game when you've broken...

JUNIOR COLSON: Well, that one was interesting because I still, like, I broke my hand. I finished the job. I felt it when it broke. It was early in the drive. I told Mike B., I think my hand is broke. He said, what do you mean? I feel my hand's broken, bro. You sure? You want to go out? No, let's finish this drive. We finished the drive. I went and told my coach, my hand's broken. He was, like, huh? My hand's broken. And then we call Phil over and all that stuff. He filled out my hand and he said we have to go get X-rays on it.

But we had about four minutes left in the quarter, in the half. He was like, what do you want to do, want to go up

there right now? Said, can we just wrap it? He wrapped it in a certain way. Finished our drive. Came back out. We had another drive. Finished that drive. And we ran straight to the tunnel. Did some X-rays on it. It shows, it was a clean break, clean snap. And he was, like, shoot, it's a clean break. I was, like, can we cast it up?

So he just put a big cast on it. Came out the second half and just played ball. And after that, went and saw the doctor the next day.

Q. What goes into playing with a club on your hand?

JUNIOR COLSON: It's weird especially the first couple of games, it's weird tackling. It's weird, the club goes all the way around here. You can't wrap around people. It's weird.

Every type of hit you felt your hand move a little bit. I hope a bone's not broken now. Just playing in it, mostly tried not to focus on it too much. The more you focus on your hand the more it affects your play. I just had to go out there and, especially during practice, just change the way I tackle and change the way I hit people in certain ways, which has been good for me.

It's been able to face that. Being able to learn to tackle different ways, being able to learn, especially in season certain things. I think it's been huge for me for my growth as a player.

Q. How much do you think this defensive scheme has put you in position to be -- going into the season you're a first-round -- talk about production as possibility. But how much do you feel like the defense itself has put you in position in that sense, especially the emphasis of being a little bit bigger -- hasn't been really in the NFL with Coach McDonald or Coach Minter up close?

JUNIOR COLSON: I don't think anybody can touch our defense the way our defense has played. I think our defense is NFL defensive. So as more like our defense is more players than NFL defense has.

A lot of teams, when they talk about our defense, how do you have so many different schemes and different things. I think our defense preps you to play in any type of scheme you go into, especially when you go to the next level, in terms of schemes, able to understand their terminology right away. Just shows off how much knowledge can you retain, how much knowledge can you go into a game with.

And it's put me in the right position, Coach McDonald and now Coach Minter, he finds everybody's best things and he

makes sure he tries to bring it out on them, and that's I've been grateful to have him as a mentor, as a great guy. Me and him have connected very well because he's from Nashville. So it's been phenomenal, especially our defensive scheme has been -- it's one day guys you were able to look at it, it's an awful lot.

Q. Coach Brown, obviously some smaller linebackers, especially inside, probably would have played on the outside.

JUNIOR COLSON: I came in thinking I was going to play edge. That was my mentality. In high school, if you watched my film I was on the edge. To be moved inside, it was different. Having was fun. Going out to play ball.

Q. Emphasizing bigger better, could you talk about that, what they tried to emphasize to you, especially in the defensive scheme?

JUNIOR COLSON: Coach Herb, Coach Herb gets you ready for everything. The way you prep, the way we practice and lift. You have no choice but to get better, playing the game putting emphasis on it, just being able, especially our defense, a lot of our guys are bigger because we play such physical defense, such a physical game, go out there and be able to bring it, bring it each and every play.

I put the size on to be able to go out there and do that. I still kept my speed, which meant an awful lot.

Q. That process, to try to find the right -- to maintain the speed.

JUNIOR COLSON: It was like two-week span, just experimenting. Test it out, especially early on. I'll test out 250. I'll test out during camp. Test out 250. Test out 245. Certain games, okay, I don't need -- my speed, I might need to be bigger, a lot of games I'll play at close 250, 247. Right now I'm at 235. It just changes because I'm able to fluctuate my weight so well and keep everything the same, same strength, same speed. So as soon as just gotta test it out throughout the weeks and see which one you best fit at.

Q. Michigan style, Champion Circle, it feels like they really try to sell like unique experiences to boosters. I guess is there anything from a player's point of view that you've been involved with?

JUNIOR COLSON: Champions Circle, Jared Wainwright has done such a great job with it. He's been able to take it out of the water and throw it to flow and make sure everybody he knows a lot especially the Michigan team.

The way he has perhaps more like NFL, you get certain things. Like you get certain experiences with some of those donors, come watch, interact with the players and the guys, and that's once-in-a-lifetime experience for some of those guys. That's something they love to do. Something they love to cherish because they love being at Michigan, loved being part of the Michigan team.

So we love having them around, love having those type of guys around, because they have so much knowledge, especially some of our guys because they've had their own businesses, certain things, certain fields we want to go into like real estate finance, all those things.

Having those guys around, being able to bounce ideas and bounce -- soak in as much as you can. I always have my notebook ready when I'm around those guys because they have so many nuggets and things to drop. They watch forever. Having those type of guys around, building those type of relationships, has been great for the team, great for the program.

Q. Has there been anybody in particular that maybe you developed a relationship with?

JUNIOR COLSON: Yes, there's a lot of them. May Forbes, he's been a great mentor to me. My last year, those type of guys. They've been phenomenal to me in my growth as a businessman, my growth as a man in a way because they have so much knowledge because they've been around the locker room a few times. And certain types of fields I want to hit on. So having those guys kind of mentor you, and it's kind of like school in a way, but it's something you love to do.

Q. So the way they're treated almost like, Jared wants to treat them almost like owners would be treated with an NFL team with that sort of access.

JUNIOR COLSON: I don't really know how much about owners and those type of things. It's more treated as more like mentorship. Mentorship like, at the end of the day we have a job, but at the end of the day there are certain fields we want to hit into, but sometimes football kind of hinders some of that. Don't do as many different internships for those fields.

So having those guys being able to come in, talk to us, drop nuggets on us, has been phenomenal to have and just allow us to build connections, allow us to build relationships with those guys.

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