

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

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Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Jaylen Harrell

Press Conference

Q. Part of this narrative is you've never seen a quarterback like you're going to see at the Rose Bowl. Is that accurate? You've probably seen enough tape to think we've seen this before, like someone in week 3 or someone that resembles him? Is it similar to someone you've seen, and is there different preparation as a result?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Our preparation is kind of what it's been all year, nothing too crazy. Like you said, this is a different challenge ahead of us. Jalen Milroe, he's a different quarterback than we've seen all year, freaky athletic, can make all the throws, big throws, stuff like that.

This is a different level of quarterback we've played as far as athletic ability-wise, but we prepare how we prepared all year and stick to our pillars and the things we do and our identity.

Q. How much have you watched the Texas tape and seeing how they attacked him differently than other teams subsequently?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Texas, they went into that mindset that no one was going to stop them. They didn't care they were playing in Tuscaloosa. I feel like they won up front in the trenches, and that was some great tape to watch. They did a really good job against them.

Q. What about the chaos this year, Coach Harbaugh being out the first three games? What kind of impact did that have on you guys and how did you stay focused?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I felt like we just stayed together as a team. That was the main thing. We kept our brotherhood, didn't care about the outside noise. You've been seeing it all year. Like I said, we just stayed together.

We had Coach's back, he had our back, and we tried to



stay together and handle business on the field regardless.

Q. Was there any heightened anxiety or some concern?

JAYLEN HARRELL: No, I don't think there was anxiety all year.

Q. How much did the NIL, how much does that play into guys' decisions of whether they might come back for another year? I know it's not necessarily just one thing.

JAYLEN HARRELL: In general, I feel like that's a new thing in the culture of football. I'm sure it plays a pretty big role in guys wanting to come back and stuff like that.

Q. How about yourself?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I'm just focused on 'Bama right now, one track mind.

Q. Just what are your earliest memories of the Rose Bowl? Maybe watch it as a kid growing up?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I never really watched the Rose Bowl. I'm kind of learning about it now, the history and tradition of it and stuff like that. The granddaddy of them all and stuff like that.

I can't really remember too many memories of watching the Rose Bowl, but there's been some legendary performances, guys like Charles Woodson, LaMarr Woodley, guys like that.

Q. What are some of the things that coaches have impressed upon you about the importance of this game and maybe some of the nostalgia around it?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I know it's really important. I heard the venue's great, stuff like that. Someone talked to us yesterday about how we look at the game against Ohio State and said this is like ten times more. It seems like it will be a fun environment, but keep the main thing the main thing. Got to go out there and handle business.



Q. What has it meant this year Coach Harbaugh has publicly come out and talked very forcefully about the need for revenue sharing with the players? You have games like this where you're going to see all this. What does that mean to you as a player to have a coach come out and call for that?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Like I said, Coach had our back all year. We've had his back all year. It just shows how much he is like a players' coach. You don't see a lot of college coaches going out and saying stuff like that.

So it's just coach using his platform and expressing what should be done correctly, that's why we all love Coach.

Q. Have there been some things since you've gotten to Michigan, like maybe you're growing up in high school and watching college football and there's the pageantry and being in big time games, but have you gotten a sense of how much money the sport generates?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I can just tell like, especially with all the viewers and stuff like that, I can tell it generates a lot of money, yes, sir.

Q. You were recruited by Alabama? What was that experience like? How was it being recruited by Coach Saban?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I was recruited by Alabama a little bit. I wouldn't say they heavily recruited me. I met Coach Saban. Great coach obviously.

Q. Coach Harbaugh, what stood out about him in the recruiting process?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Coach, he's a different guy, a different animal. I love Coach, unique personality and stuff like that. Coach made me feel like this was home, so I felt like this was the right choice for me.

Q. Have you ever seen the video of him in the shirts and skins game?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I haven't.

Q. When he went to camp and took his shirt off?

JAYLEN HARRELL: You've got to show me the video.

Q. Coach Moore left to be a head coach at the end of the season. What did he show you in terms of his potential to be a head coach?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Showed me his ready. In the toughest games of the year, the most important games of the year, he led us. He had our back, and we had his back, and we got the job done. That shows everything, whatever a college needs to know about him being a head coach.

Q. They were saying yesterday, somewhat joking, there was no jet lag for you guys. What is your travel routine? How do you keep your energy up to have a good week of practice before a big game like this?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I feel like it all starts with sleep and hydration. Getting the right amount of sleep, going to sleep early, waking up, getting a good breakfast, stuff like that, and just carrying out my routine throughout the day.

So just staying focused and locked in and just focus on the little things that become big things in the big moments.

Q. Is this a routine-based team? Do you do the same thing week in and week out, no changes, no matter what?

JAYLEN HARRELL: The whole team or me?

Q. The whole team, yeah. Like is there a system kind of?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I feel like, yeah, we do things a certain way around here, yes, ma'am.

Q. With Alabama they have this incredibly heavy offensive line that they're well-known for. Is that something that you've talked about, how to move a very immovable object that's like -- I don't know how much you notice when you're pushing around a 320 versus a 350-pound player, but is that something you've talked about in meetings at all?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Obviously they've got a very big O-line. We've just got to play our technique, play long, and stuff like that. They're great in run blocking, great in pass pro. So you know it's going to be a great challenge, but it's going to be fun, good-on-good.

Q. What stands out to you about the front that you're going to be facing?

JAYLEN HARRELL: They work good together. They're good on double-teams, athletic tackles, big bodies, like you said, 6'6", 6'7", all 350, 360, stuff like that. So pretty good O-line all around for sure. Great challenge ahead.

Q. Any specific impressions of Kadyn Proctor, the freshman left tackle?

JAYLEN HARRELL: For a freshman, he's real big, athletic, great feet, stuff like that.

Q. Last year the semifinal didn't go the way you guys wanted to. What changes in approach or mentality or any sort of way going into this game that were maybe different than last year?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Coach all year, after that game last year, that's when we kind of saw the pillars of our defense, stuff like that, kind of come back to the basics. Last year when it was needed, we didn't have it. Communication wasn't there, our angles and tackling wasn't there.

So we really took it to heart this off-season and really focused on that and made it an emphasis to get back to where we wanted to be, which is right now. So it comes to light.

Q. What were the specifics of the -- I guess the beat Georgia period for most of the year? What was the sort of emphasis of that period in practice?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Oh, talking about the beat Georgia? That's just a period we get big, like 12, 13, whatever personnel, and we downhill run, and the offense got one chance to pass the ball and four downs to get a first.

Q. It's just kind of like the toughness?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, kind of like an inside run drill, stuff like that.

Q. There was some talk about the SEC bias, all the talk about that. What's that mean to you and the discussion about Alabama and Michigan can't beat Alabama, that kind of stuff?

JAYLEN HARRELL: You know, Monday, January 1st, that's where we do the talking, with our pads. That's all we can really do, not really get into the SEC talk, stuff like that. They're a great team. We're a great team. Good-on-good. Let's go battle it out.

Q. Who's given you the look for Jalen Milroe in practice?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Alex Orji, and also Jack Grusser, great athletes.

Q. What does that look like? He's just running around back there? You guys are working on rush lanes?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, like you said, rush lanes, scramble drill, stuff like that. We do a great job of working together as a front at backers, on the back end, stuff like that. Just working together as a cohesive defense to get the job done.

Q. We got to see a little bit of Alex the last two games, what he can do. He's fast.

JAYLEN HARRELL: He's fast, freaky, big.

Q. Is he the freakiest athlete on this team?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, he is, him or Kenneth. You saw him run.

Q. That play at Penn State. What was that like when you watched that on film?

JAYLEN HARRELL: It was crazy. Like 340 and tracking down the running back, that speaks for itself, you know.

Q. How many times do you run that back in the room when you're watching it?

JAYLEN HARRELL: That's one you keep with the clicker and keep going. Like slow it down maybe, change the angle, sideline view, head-on view. It's freaky.

Q. Do you have a beat Alabama package? Is it the same thing as Georgia, just change it, or just use a similar thing?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I mean, it started off as beat Ohio, and then after we played them, it started off beat Iowa, and then beat Alabama. So it's the same thing, yeah.

Q. And you said it's inside run?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah.

Q. Like a nine-on-seven kind of deal?

JAYLEN HARRELL: There you go, perfect.

Q. Did you say you were allowed one throw in four downs?

JAYLEN HARRELL: That's beat Georgia. It's a little different.

Q. In beat Alabama, are you allowed to throw a little more or less?

JAYLEN HARRELL: No, just straight on head hunting.

Q. How tough is that drill?

JAYLEN HARRELL: It's tough. It's kind of what we pride ourself as a team, being physical, being dominant.

Q. Is that the toughest one you guys do?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Drill? Yeah.

Q. And you carry that through the whole season, right?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yes, sir.

Q. Your coach played in the Rose Bowl, and that's probably not something a lot of other teams can say. Has he prepped you at all on the history and what it means to be here?

JAYLEN HARRELL: We had a great history lesson yesterday. Desmond Howard and Jon Jansen, they came and talked to us yesterday. Got some pretty insightful things about the venue, the history of it. Some of the great players like Charles Woodson and LaMarr Woodley played in it and stuff like that. So it was great.

Q. Did you guys give your Coach any crap about the fact his team did not win?

JAYLEN HARRELL: No, we don't.

Q. Even having a guy like Alex, how much can you prepare for a guy like Jalen Milroe because what he does when the play breaks down?

JAYLEN HARRELL: It's good to see a look in practice, but obviously come game time, it's going to be different. You asked the question about the O-line being 360. We don't have O-linemen that are 360, so it's a little different in practice.

Q. Do you feel like you do your best?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I guess.

Q. Do you have a chip on your shoulder because people say you've never faced anybody like Jalen Milroe?

JAYLEN HARRELL: It's kind of the same thing. We block out the outside noise. That's really it.

Q. What is different about facing a mobile

quarterback, especially as the game gets on, maintaining rush lanes when you're tired?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, stuff like that. Everyone talks about him as a runner. I don't think they've really seen his arm on tape, like throw the ball 60 yards on the run, in the pocket, stuff like that. So he really does more than just running the ball.

Obviously, when the play breaks down and they need a spark, you know 4's getting the ball. So really being keyed into that.

Q. When you guys found out you're playing Alabama, what's the image in your mind of quintessential Alabama? Do you have one?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Really just good-on-good. That's all you think about when you're 'Bama-Michigan. Like I'm pretty sure everyone is, okay, that's going to be a heavy weight matchup. That's going to be a great game.

Q. When they announced it, there was a camera in the room. It seemed like you guys were a little bit surprised. What was that reaction that was happening?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I'm pretty sure everyone in the room was, like not scared, but thinking it was going to be Florida State or something. It was Alabama. I don't think there was any scaredness or stuff like that. It was just like, oh, it's 'Bama, not Florida State, type of thing.

Q. Is this as big of a challenge that you guys have had during this run?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I mean, yeah. It's playoff team, good-on-good, like I said. Definitely our biggest challenge up front as a team. Looking forward to it.

Q. You said not necessarily a scared thing, but you go from the opportunity to play a team without a quarterback to now we're talking about Jalen Milroe. Was there a little bit of oh, dang, because it would have been easier with Florida State?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Not really. Like I said, we really just thought it was going to be Florida State, and then it was 'Bama. I'm pretty sure that's what you saw in some of the reactions, but whatever.

Q. Jaylen, all year you guys have been really good about not taking penalties. Right now you're number one in the nation with fewest penalty yards per game. Where does that start? How do you kind of like keep



that distance?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I kind of just, like you said, our discipline. That's really what it's big on. We do a little meeting every week called TTG, where we learn about situational football, penalties and stuff like that. Just really getting a jump on everything and just being dialed in to things, what to do, what not to do, and stuff like that.

So just hone in on those situational football that Coach Newsome talked to us about.

Q. Is part of that learning how to interact with refs?

JAYLEN HARRELL: What do you mean?

Q. Just learning how to kind of handle them better, how to not get frustrated at them?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, Coach always tells us not to talk to the ref. It's up to him to talk to the ref. I don't do too much talking to the ref honestly.

Q. But you took your helmet off?

(Laughter)?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, I did. Won't do that again.

Q. Do you get the sense that people are looking at Michigan as the 4 seed and Alabama is the 1 going into this?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yeah, I feel like we're underdogs. We're looked at as the 4. We're looked at as the 4 seed and whatnot. But they're entitled to their own opinion.

Q. Does that do anything for you guys as you prepare?

JAYLEN HARRELL: We've had a chip on our shoulder the whole year really. Like I said, we've got to focus on us. It's not about them. Focus on our preparation, what we do, just don't change. That's really it.

Q. What's the biggest lesson that you guys learned from that TCU game?

JAYLEN HARRELL: Like I said earlier, the biggest lesson I feel like we took away was we weren't at our best really like the past couple games that last season. Our communication wasn't the best. The little things, like our tackling, our angles, and stuff like that.

So really just, like I said, going into the last off-season,

Coach Minter and the defensive staff created our four pillars, and that's kind of what you've been hearing all year about communication, block disruption, ball disruption, stuff like that.

Q. Does a shutout over a team like Iowa give you guys momentum coming in?

JAYLEN HARRELL: No disrespect to Iowa, but there really like more of a defensive team. 'Bama has a different type of offense, they're explosive.

Q. As far as the perception that you're maybe the 4 seed and they're the 1 seed, how much of that is a result of SEC being perceived as faster, more athletic? Is that something you've been hearing leading up to this game?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I feel like they've just been doing that because it's 'Bama, big stereotype. Oh, we're playing 'Bama. They've been here, whatever, eight times or ten times already. So everyone jumps on 'Bama when it's time to play playoffs, you know.

Q. Did you guys say what about us? We've been here three straight years?

JAYLEN HARRELL: And lost. Like I said, we can't really say that too much. We've just got to go out there and handle business the right way and get the job done. Like you said, we've been here now our third year, but we've been unsuccessful two years in a row.

So we've got to get back to the basics and focus on our preparation and do the little things and get ready to go.

Q. You said you guys have kind of had that chip on your shoulder all year.

JAYLEN HARRELL: Yes, sir.

Q. How much does Coach Harbaugh and the way he approaches things and the way he is factor into having that chip on your shoulder?

JAYLEN HARRELL: I think as a team, we just kind of keep everything in house, worry about us, don't worry about what the outside noise says or our opponent. It's really about us, our focus, our preparation, how we practice, how we prepare, and do everything.

The little things that come to light in the big moments, I feel like that's the big thing.

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