

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Thursday, December 28, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Jase McClellan

Press Conference

JASE McCLELLAN: I feel great with this time together, just get ready, get some time and just get back ready. So I feel good.

I have a foot injury, banged up. Gave us some time off.

Q. (No microphone.)

JASE McCLELLAN: There was no way. I was trying not to miss the SEC championship game. They told me it was the best idea just to miss it.

Q. How hard was it not playing in that game?

JASE McCLELLAN: It was hard seeing my team out there, watching my team out there without me. Not being able to play with them, that was hard.

Q. (No microphone.)

JASE McCLELLAN: That was a great feeling. That's what we harp on in our running back room, have the next-man-up mentality, no dropoff, next person goes in.

Q. Michigan was one of the top ranked run defenses. What have you seen from them on tape? What makes them so difficult?

JASE McCLELLAN: We talked about that. That's a great challenge for us, running the football. Those guys move up front, move around, they swim, loop a lot. The linebackers come in and plug a lot. That's going to be a great challenge for us.

Q. Coming off a foot injury, is it good for you that this game is on grass instead of turf or...

JASE McCLELLAN: Either way you want to see it. With grass, it's kind of slippery. With turf, you can play better.



Q. Do you feel 100%?

JASE McCLELLAN: I feel 100%. Still getting time, so a couple more days to game time. It's even better.

Q. What did you feel when you got back on the field?

JASE McCLELLAN: I was getting used to playing with the pain. I'm still working with that.

Q. What are your thoughts on possibly introducing the headsets on the sidelines in college football?

JASE McCLELLAN: I think it would be a great idea just for us to get a visual of what we seen. Last play, some guys can't remember what happened last play. Kind of a great idea for it.

Q. What are some of the other challenges in communication?

JASE McCLELLAN: When we come to the sideline, coach ask us from what we remember a couple plays back in the drive. Just to pull it up on a tablet, that would be a great idea.

Q. Michigan has been in the national headlines for good and bad reasons this year. The sign stealing scandal, is that something you thought about going into this game at all?

JASE McCLELLAN: I don't know how to answer. Not as players, but probably coaches have thought about it. Probably change stuff around, field marks, yeah.

Q. Do you feel healthier aside from the foot, having the break, getting a month off basically?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, a month off for us changed the way we practiced. Kind of no contact. Good for us just to get a rest for our body, a break.

Q. You feel more refreshed?

JASE McCLELLAN: Kind of like a reset.



Q. How hard is it to get back in rhythm after time off?

JASE McCLELLAN: I wouldn't say it was kind of hard. It's just what we do, play football. Alabama, we focus on that. Focus on staying where we at.

Q. How do you think your offensive line has progressed this year?

JASE McCLELLAN: I think it's been great progression. Couple young guys on the offensive line, especially freshmen, Kady. Just seeing his development and seeing them as a whole. It was great for them.

Q. The size of the offensive line, as a running back, is playing behind people that big, is that useful for you?

JASE McCLELLAN: It is very useful. Big guys take up more than one person, just creating holes, moving people. That's great for them.

Q. On a personal level, it's the Rose Bowl, a lot of history. Has being able to be a part of that...

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, it's been something to think about. Rose Bowl one of the first great games. Just taking part in history. We can create history in this game. It's great.

Q. When you watch Michigan's running backs, what do you see?

JASE McCLELLAN: I see same thing we harp on in our running back room: toughness, physicalness. Those guys push downhill, shift, making space moves. Something we seen.

Q. Do you have a favorite Terrion story?

JASE McCLELLAN: Man, Terrion got a story every day. Yeah, team comedy. He got a story every day.

Q. Team comedy?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, team comedian. He has a story every day, something he did. I ain't got a favorite one, but all of 'em funny.

Q. Do you have an example of him being funny, though?

JASE McCLELLAN: Let's see. Yesterday what did he do? Like Monday, we had a walk-through practice. He blogging on his camera. He came in, said something. He

said something. Like, (Indiscernible) go against the defense. It was funny, man. Just be in the moment, pretty funny.

Q. He's got like his phone, holding it up blogging?

JASE McCLELLAN: His own personal camera down here.

Q. He's been bringing it everywhere?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, he been bringing it every day.

Q. Your foot, how is it feeling?

JASE McCLELLAN: It's feeling great with the time we had off, the treatment. It feels great.

Q. Do you feel 100%?

JASE McCLELLAN: I feel close to 100%.

Q. What is it going to take for you guys to be consistent, make sure that you can leave those bad plays behind?

JASE McCLELLAN: Focus and attention to detail. Remember why we're running some plays, what everybody's job is on each play. That's going to build consistency.

Q. Any changes with the film routine this week with your iPads?

JASE McCLELLAN: Those guys upstairs, we got to watch film like a whole running back room. Something we adjusted to.

Q. What was behind that?

JASE McCLELLAN: Just what Michigan known for, what they have out there, just with the play call stealing.

Q. Is it an adjustment to change the way you have to do things?

JASE McCLELLAN: Not a real adjustment. We still watch film.

Q. (Question about the slogan.)

JASE McCLELLAN: No, just the meaning behind it, just building us as a brotherhood, closing our bond. Everybody just taking part in the meaning behind it, just keeping it going.

Q. Do you know what your reaction was when you first heard it?

JASE McCLELLAN: It was back in the summer, first said it. What you mean? Keep saying it. Then he finally told us, like, what it meant behind, the definition. Keep it around.

Q. How are you guys preparing differently because of the Michigan sign stealing scandal that came out this year?

JASE McCLELLAN: Only preparation we changed doing that is just film. Had to change up how we shared it. That's probably a change.

Q. How you guys shared it amongst each other?

JASE McCLELLAN: Shared amongst each other, how we watch it.

Q. How different is that compared to what you usually do?

JASE McCLELLAN: It's not much different. It's just that we don't get straight to our iPads, the practice film straight to our iPads. Only the coaches get it.

Q. Did you ever see the video when Michigan found out they were playing you guys? Did you ever see that video from their party?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, the watch party. I seen the video.

Q. Did you have any reaction to that? They seemed surprised.

JASE McCLELLAN: Everybody was surprised that we got in.

Q. From other teams' perspective, do you think seeing that A up there is a little intimidating, people don't want to play you guys right now?

JASE McCLELLAN: I think probably know it's going to be a challenge to play us, the team we are, we're known for. Probably that.

Q. What has it been like this year to be on an Alabama team that has been doubted? Not typical.

JASE McCLELLAN: It's been a challenge for us. Just starting from the beginning week two, week three, everybody hung us out after that loss. But we all had our

backs, knew what we had to do, bought into the process to get where we are today.

Q. Did you guys deserve some of that criticism or...

JASE McCLELLAN: I believe it was still early. I believe all the criticism we got, it was just 'cause of what we did in that game. So if they feel like we deserved it, what we did now...

Q. We've reached a point now where you guys probably don't remember Reggie Bush... What's the first Rose Bowl that comes to mind that you remember?

JASE McCLELLAN: First Rose Bowl, I can kind of remember being the first one I played was when T.C. played.

Q. 2010, Wisconsin.

JASE McCLELLAN: T.C. played. That's probably the memory. I had some family.

Q. Weird transition where there's the bowls, four-team Playoff, but next year it will be 12 teams. That will be the post-season. Are you looking forward to the expanded Playoff?

JASE McCLELLAN: I think it will be a great adventure into it. Make sure that the best teams have an opportunity to play for the championship. Kind of the thing we had going on this year, people getting left out. Just showing everybody who really deserves it.

Q. When the matchup was unveiled, what did you think about Michigan? Did you know much about them?

JASE McCLELLAN: I was thinking just basically thinking about the matchup. They're known for their defense. Harped on them being physical, solid up front. Just thinking about that. What is our challenge going to be as a running back. Just thinking about that, yeah.

Q. What have you learned about the defense as you've watched them?

JASE McCLELLAN: I've seen those guys on film, see that they move a lot up front. Linebackers are solid and firm. They plug gaps, come in hard. Just seeing that all around as a running back, I see it's going to be a challenge for us. They lead the nation in yards.

Q. When it comes to their size up front, is there an

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SEC defense you can compare that to?

JASE McCLELLAN: I would say similar size, compare to Tennessee, A&M.

Q. (No microphone.)

JASE McCLELLAN: Basically seeing him, like, get vision as a runner, true vision. Those plays we call for him, actually seeing where to go with the ball, following the blockers. As a running back, too, seeing him running the ball, open up the plays for us. Great to see that.

Q. What kind of challenge does he present to the opposing defense?

JASE McCLELLAN: Trying to contain him... If you lose an extra play, just try to stop him from running. When you drop that extra play, it opens up lanes for him. That's a challenge.

Q. Has he become more patient as a passer over the course of the year?

JASE McCLELLAN: I feel like that's something they worked on in the quarterback room, just him going through his progressions. Something we harped on. Especially with running backs...

Q. The sign stealing stuff from Michigan, how much of that did you pay attention to?

JASE McCLELLAN: It's something guys upstairs, coaches and stuff, took care of. We didn't really very much worry about it.

Q. Has it changed your prep at all for the game?

JASE McCLELLAN: Not too much. Just changed the way we see film. The players don't get film for practice. That's the only thing.

Q. How is this week different?

JASE McCLELLAN: We watched film as a whole, all the running backs watched film together. We don't get it individually. Just send it to one computer.

Q. Typically you get it on your iPad?

JASE McCLELLAN: Typically we get it individually. Not this week.

Q. (Question about the sign stealing.)

JASE McCLELLAN: They didn't so much explain. We just adjusted to it.

Q. You haven't done that at all this year?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, kind of first time.

Q. Has it changed for you at all? Instead of looking at it individually, you have to look at it as a group? Does that change your prep at all?

JASE McCLELLAN: We do it daily on our own team. We just come all together and watch.

Q. Disadvantage not to have the freedom to do it on your own?

JASE McCLELLAN: I don't see it as a disadvantage. Most weeks we watch film, yeah.

Q. Has it increased the time you watch film together?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, we spend more time watching film together, so...

Q. Coach Saban is old enough to be a grandpa. Seems to connect to players. How?

JASE McCLELLAN: Coach Saban, he's still in his youth a little bit. He jokes and stuff. His connection with us. I feel like he's truly trying to connect with us, just being our team, listening to us more, just seeing what we feel like. He actually, like, listens. He tells us stuff, then he listens what we want from him, what we want to see.

Q. When you first got here, it was more it's going to be my way?

JASE McCLELLAN: More like the guys in the leadership taking his word and giving it to the team. He was the true message. This year it's kind of equal.

Q. Spread the message as opposed to contribute to the message?

JASE McCLELLAN: Pretty much.

Q. People talked about how he has an ability to adapt.

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah.

Q. Anything else that showed the ability to grow or evolve?

JASE McCLELLAN: I would say, like, ability to grow from

him, from Coach Saban?

Q. Yes.

JASE McCLELLAN: Probably like his coaching style. People who know him, seeing the video clips of him being tense in practice pretty much. He hasn't been kind of like that this year. Been falling back on that part, his progression.

Q. Was it a surprise to see him a little bit more mellow?

JASE McCLELLAN: Yeah, it was pretty much a surprise. When I first got here, he was like almost every day aggressive Coach Saban, seeing that.

Q. What is the impact on players to have him a little bit looser?

JASE McCLELLAN: Probably he says this all the time, They don't make 'em like they used to. That's probably what he meant by that.

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