

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Thursday, December 28, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Isaiah Bond

Press Conference



Q. What's it like being in the underdog role as far as in this situation? You guys aren't the underdog very often.

ISAIAH BOND: I feel like it's a great way to go out there and show why we're not the underdog, being the underdog. So I feel like, like in the Georgia game, saying Georgia is going to beat us even though we didn't think that was going to happen. But it does add some fire to the chamber.

Q. Does it help that the Texas and USF game were super challenging for you guys in terms of getting the outcomes you wanted? Was that like the turning point, you think, for you guys?

ISAIAH BOND: I guess you could say that. I definitely told the guys after the Texas game, because I knew the type of team we had, and I was very disappointed. So I definitely told the guys, like, listen, I know this game, we lost this game, but the season's not over.

We shouldn't lose no more games this season. We really wasn't supposed to lose this game. So I told the guys, c'mon, settle down, strap down, I could see the talent in the room. I know what everybody can do. We'll be able to get this done. Them believing in that and in the byproduct, that's why we're here.

Q. With the NIL and just with the Grave Digger T-shirts, can you just kind of describe how quickly that I guess all that sort of came together? I don't know if people reached out to you or -- Jalen's idea?

ISAIAH BOND: The Grave Digger, I had like people from Alabama reach out to me about the Grave Digger. Because obviously it was a legendary player. We didn't want people getting out with the idea before me, so we trademarked that and dropped some T-shirts. We didn't want other people making money out of it. That's why we dropped it so quick.

Q. Is that something, like, I guess where you're working with them to do those things in different areas?

ISAIAH BOND: Yeah, I'm definitely working with people. It's not all 100 percent just me. Definitely have a team behind me working with the shirts as well.

Q. With Michigan, sign stealing investigation, are you guys putting in any safeguards or trying to find ways around it to keep it top secret?

ISAIAH BOND: I mean, we already -- being at the University of Alabama, we're going to have teams that just do whatever they kind of do to get a little edge. So stealing signs it's not the first time it's ever happened before. We change our signs almost every game, just knowing the fact that people will go back and watch TV, copy us and steal the signs.

It's us going out there. They'll have to play us on the field. We'll see what happens when you're on the field.

Q. Have you done anything specific to kind of keep your stuff under lock and key?

ISAIAH BOND: Like I said, we change our signs. We don't keep the same signs every game, especially if we go through like coaches that have been through the program before because they might already know the signals. We'll change it up for that game. Yeah, we definitely -- it's going to be something they never seen before.

Q. Do you guys joke about going back to huddling and sending in plays with players or any of that stuff just to really shake it up?

ISAIAH BOND: No, we're just going to go out there and just play ball like how we normally play. And it's going to be on them to stop it.

Q. When that stuff was front-page news back in October, what did you think about it. It was all over, wasn't it?



ISAIAH BOND: It was. I'm going to say no comment on that. I don't want to go out there and see my truth on that. I'm going to say no comment.

Q. With the way Alabama's, the NIL and marketing people are helping you now, has it always been like that or has this been -- this was a new industry that didn't exist three years ago. Have you seen an evolution at the school?

ISAIAH BOND: Definitely because I came in with the class, where NIL was kind of transitioning into college. It wasn't like really up front. It was kind of like when you get to college, you play, be on the field, you get paid.

Honestly, with that, I like it. It's good for the players. We work so many hours of the week. So I feel like, honestly, it's the least they could do is at least pay us a little bit for how many hours you're putting in.

At the end of the day it's almost compared to work but we're walking around some days we're 85. And we're 19, 20 years old. It's a lot of tax on our body. The money definitely helps a little bit.

Q. Have you seen the way Alabama's collective or Yea Alabama, that's kind of a new thing. Have you seen an evolution in how kind of the school helps the players facilitate things?

ISAIAH BOND: Yeah, most definitely. I could definitely say in my scenario, my collective, definitely gone up even since when I got here. So it's obviously, like I said, going back to getting on the field, you show them your value.

Like Coach said when we first came here, you show your value, you're going to get paid your value. So them going out and believing that I have great value for the team, it's a great feeling.

Q. Coach Harbaugh has said a couple times, he's spoken extensively there needs to be revenue sharing. Have you seen that at all?

ISAIAH BOND: I have not. I have not recalled -- I don't really watch too much TV. I don't know what goes on on TV or the press or anything like that, unless it comes up on my social media. But TV, I don't watch too much of that.

Q. How helpful is it for players to have coaches who obviously benefit very much in this system speak out for there should be more of this money should be shared with the players? How helpful is it, do you think, that coaches who are benefitting very much

from this, they're making a ton, 10 million a year in some cases, that they're out front saying, hey, this money needs to be shared more with the players?

ISAIAH BOND: I mean, that's obviously a great feeling, a great feeling to hear especially coming as an athlete, and especially from a head coach like Nick Saban. A lot of people will listen to Coach Saban. It's great to hear a legendary coach like that saying the players deserve it.

Q. It was Harbaugh who said that.

ISAIAH BOND: He's another great coach as well, not taking nothing away from him. He's a great coach. Coaches like that speaking their truth, and they want their players, honestly, to be better in life because at the end of the day money/happiness, bring happiness. The two of them go together.

Q. How much since you've been at Alabama, are there things where you saw firsthand how much money gets generated for the programs? I don't know if it's like whether it's just --

ISAIAH BOND: Definitely a lot. Definitely it a lot. (Laughter).

Q. When did that first kind of hit you, where maybe you're like in high school and you're, like, this is really fun to play in front of a big crowd, but maybe you see things, like what ticket prices are?

ISAIAH BOND: I mean, I never really realized how much schools are making until NIL came around. And it was breaking down the basics, because I was very new.

I remember when they were talking about how much these schools are making. I was, like, whoa, I didn't know they were making that much.

I know football is making a lot of money but I didn't know it was on that type of scale. Obviously I feel what they're contributing back, it's nothing contributed compared to what they're making, but it's something that helps. So I'm appreciative.

Q. When you watch film on the Michigan secondary, what do you see?

ISAIAH BOND: I see a great defense. I see a well-coached defense. Guys are, they're going to be in their spots. They're great athletes as well.

Q. How has that play changed your life, in the weeks since then, the fourth-down-and-31?



ISAIAH BOND: My life has definitely changed a lot since that play. I'll give you an example. I was at a basketball game. And I had to leave --

Q. Where?

ISAIAH BOND: Bama game. I had to leave. I was on the court, too. It was running down, like, trying to take pictures of me. I had to get up out of there. That was like my first, I would say, big-time moment.

But I don't be going out there anymore especially (indiscernible), because everybody be trying to -- I'm more reserved, to-myself type of person. I'm not really too social. I really like to chill myself. So I don't like attention, stuff like that. But it's good to have, but I don't know. It don't really impress me too much.

Q. You had to leave because you were inundated?

ISAIAH BOND: Yes, because it was interrupting the game. The game going on, it's like a hundred people in line trying to take a picture. And I'm on the court. It was kind of distracting to the game. I'm going to get out of here before it gets bigger.

Q. The Alabama secondary you guys have, some really talented guys. What have you seen from that group -- obviously you get to go against them in practice -- that makes them the group that they are?

ISAIAH BOND: Honestly, a great secondary. I think we have the best secondary in the country. I'll say that first. But them going against us every single day, one of the best receiver groups in the country -- iron sharpens iron. When you go against the best you'll get the best.

Q. I realize Robinson doesn't coach your position, but you get to see him in practice. How do you describe what you see from him in terms of the kind of coach he has?

ISAIAH BOND: T-Rob, he's a great, phenomenal coach. We have a great relationship even though I'm on opposite side of the ball. I love what he's doing with the DBs just love everything he's doing for the team.

Q. Your relationship, you telling him about that, how do you build that, because he doesn't coach your position?

ISAIAH BOND: Coming out of high school, I was an athlete, so I played DB as well. So they wanted me to play DB at first, but I ended up making that switch to offense

because I wanted to play receiver.

He recruited me. That's why we have a good relationship. We talked even before I committed to Bama. We always talked.

Q. How often do you think you could still play DB?

ISAIAH BOND: Most def. DB is kind of a natural thing. It's natural to guard somebody. You either got it or you don't. Not everybody can guard somebody. It's not that easy to go out there and just guard a nationally talented and gifted human from Jesus, you know what I'm saying? You have to stick with him all the way down the field. It's not that easy.

You have to have the skills and the right tool set. And I've been training for DB longer than receiver. It's not like I'm just out there. I've got DB. I know, like, the DB techniques.

Q. What's the transition like from coming in, them wanting you to play defense to now playing receiver?

ISAIAH BOND: I felt like honestly it helped me a lot. Just knowing really what a DB, what goes in their head because I was a DB, what coverages is, what a DB might do in a situation. I feel like all that background knowledge does actually help me at receiver as well.

Q. What was the competition with coaches when you make the switch?

ISAIAH BOND: I made it in high school. So actually I didn't make a switch. I played both and I got to college and I was, like, I told the coaches I wanted to play receiver. I was, like, because I had offers for receiver and DB. So they wanted me, you could either play both.

But I told coaches I don't want to play DB. If you want me I'll play on the offensive side of the ball. It was all gravy from there. No coach had a problem with that. I kind of could choose what side of the ball I wanted to go to.

Q. It was probably tempting to play DB, right, because (indiscernible) special teams?

ISAIAH BOND: I'm not going to say it was tempting, but it's also tempting to be on offense as well. (Laughter). It's also tempting to be on offense as well because you'll be on the TV. You're going to be on ESPN regardless. So I think that's why a major reason I picked receiver, to be in the spotlight.

Q. Did you see the video of when Michigan found out they were playing you guys in the playoffs?



ISAIAH BOND: Yeah, I seen it.

Q. What did you make of that?

ISAIAH BOND: It was funny. It was really funny. You see people true emotions when you see all the cameras around. When they seen that, they probably looked back at it and coaches probably had a whole talk with them as well.

But they're definitely going to be ready to play us on the first though. We're not worried about their reaction. They'll be fired up to play us. And they going to give us their best shot. We'll come out and give our best shot.

Q. I guess it's human nature?

ISAIAH BOND: Yeah, most def, it's human nature. You're going to want, I'm not going to say the less likely team that you want to play. And you didn't get that team, so that was their natural emotions coming up.

Q. What were your first thoughts when you heard the Link over the spring and summer, what did you do when you found out what it meant?

ISAIAH BOND: The Link, it was kind of like -- it was actually after that South Florida game, and it was in Tampa, Jalen in town, it was like we all had a big talk. Actually the Texas game. Had a big talk, everybody in the locker room. It was like we're going to live and die with this Link term.

Because, like I said earlier, I seen the type of team we had. That Texas loss, I knew everybody was going to judge us out there.

I knew the type of team we had. We didn't play our best game on the field. I knew we left a lot on the table. I knew if we polished a lot of things we'll be able to do get it done. You see why we're here now.

Q. The things that happened with Michigan with the sign stealing scandal, did you do anything differently to approach this game?

ISAIAH BOND: Normally we change our signals, too. Like if we have a coach on coaching staff going to another school, we change a signal. Changing signals, this is another game for us, just gotta adjust to it. Add new plays regardless anyway. There's always something to learn. It's being a quick learner will help you adjust.

Q. Is film study at all different?

ISAIAH BOND: Film study is the same. It's in a big team room with the receivers, just watching film. We still put the same amount of hours in. Still watching film.

Q. Does this bowl prep feel the same as it was in previous trips, or does it feel different being in the playoff against Michigan?

ISAIAH BOND: I mean, I could say it feels, honestly, the same. It's the same thing we do every single week we're about to face a new opponent. Watched film on them. It's often the fact we can't watch ourselves, but we still getting hours in.

Q. Do you get with Jalen and talk to him a little more this week just because you're not able to have that more individual study, I guess, that you want?

ISAIAH BOND: Me and Jalen, we have a great relationship. We always talk. Obviously you want to have a great relationship with the quarterback and receiver. Us is talking every single day, just telling me -- I told him I believe in him all the time. I believe in trust. You have to trust somebody. Not only will you trust them, but they'll play better themselves because if you have no trust or confidence, if you're not going to go out there, feel like yourself. So I think trust and confidence is a big thing on that field.

Q. How would you describe his path through this season?

ISAIAH BOND: I would describe his path as resilience. Could have been a lot of points in the season where a regular person could have showed different sides of themselves. He stayed the same leader, same passion about football. Went out there every single day still loving it. I will say I just show true respect for the way he handled the situation as well.

Q. You're his most targeted receiver this year. Is that a product like the chemistry and trust, play calling, what led to all these opportunities?

ISAIAH BOND: Yes, definitely a product of chemistry and trust. I've gone to college and realized you're going to practice how you play. So I go 100 percent in practice. When I go out in the game, it's the same thing. We practice four, five days a week, and it's only one game. I'll probably say our practice is harder than the game. Get to the game, it's like it's another day out there, honestly.

Q. Part of that maturity element?

ISAIAH BOND: I wouldn't say it's a relief, but it's kind of like a relief on game day because (inaudible) Saturday, just gotta go out and execute.

Q. Going back to what you were talking about you playing DB. Did you ever hear the stories of DeVonta Smith, how he cross-trained while he was at Alabama playing DB?

ISAIAH BOND: I did hear that. I've heard he was one of the best DBs in the room, even when he was at receiver. I think great receivers playing DB, I think that was -- hopefully maybe one day, next season, I get on the defensive side of the ball too in practice. We'll see.

Q. It's obviously not a priority for you, but do you think you could be one of Alabama teammates if you were to make that switch?

ISAIAH BOND: Yes, definitely. I'm a great competitor. I feel like every time I'm on the field, I'm the best player on the field, no matter who is out there. Just me having that mindset and that training, it will be a byproduct of that.

Q. When you make a really famous play, do you feel an impulse to -- Ringo at Georgia made a really famous play. He said this last year, "I don't want that to be the only thing that people remember me for." Do you feel that now that you've made a really famous play?

ISAIAH BOND: I know I made a very famous play at this point. The cheer factor, social media we have nowadays. Obviously I know everybody seen it. Like I said I'm the next guy, next type of play. I want people to remember me for more stuff (inaudible). But definitely now more moments to remember me by before I get done with my college career.

Q. What did that football look like as it came toward you?

ISAIAH BOND: It looked like money. Looked like money, for sure. When I seen it in the air I knew I was going to catch it even before...

Q. And like you didn't have a single doubt? (Inaudible)?

ISAIAH BOND: I knew I was going to catch it.

Q. No questions?

ISAIAH BOND: No question.

Q. Did it look big? The ball, did it look big?

ISAIAH BOND: Looked regular size. It was in the air. I was saying God blessed me with some good eyeballs. Seen the ball, I seen where it was tracking. I knew where I had to get on the field, kind of set him up, step back on him. Seen it.

Q. Looked green as it went through the air.

ISAIAH BOND: Yeah, great throw.

Q. So when it hit your hands, you felt it. Did it hurt?

ISAIAH BOND: No, it was a regular catch.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

