

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Thursday, December 28, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Tyler Booker

Press Conference

Q. What is your best Terrion story?

TYLER BOOKER: Oh, my gosh. Right before USF, we're all in the training room getting a little bit of treatment. I forget who is the primary returner at the time, Kendrick. He said, Man, I'm going to go back there and I'm going to take it back. I'm like, Yeah, right. Terrion take it back during USF. He made a few like that this year. After he did that the first time, Let's see him doing it again.

He's been a great player, role model in his position room, great role model for everybody on the team as well. Proud of the way he's been performing.

Q. Did he find you after that?

TYLER BOOKER: I found him after that. Actually got called back. That was the worst part. He still did it.

Terrion, you told me. I told you, I told you. He was really hyped up about it.

Q. Favorite Isaiah Bond story.

TYLER BOOKER: Fourth and 31. I don't think there's a better Isaiah story. You know what I mean?

Q. How do you think this offense has evolved over the course of the year?

TYLER BOOKER: We've grown so much, done a lot better executing. What I mean by that is trusting Coach Rees' play calls. I'm not saying we didn't trust them earlier on, but really fully buying in. Once we did that, we run the ball, pass the ball, run the ball. It became more balanced. Really keeps the defense on their toes.

Then we have a quarterback like Jalen that is a third threat. Hard to account for everybody.



Q. How have you seen Coach Rees evolve?

TYLER BOOKER: He's grown so much. I feel like it was just going to take its own process. If you look at us, we have a whole bunch of new starters, new coordinator. Of course, there are going to be growing pains. I'm glad we got over them pretty quick.

We built another level of comfortability with one another. We all really mesh and grew. Coach Rees found what we like to do as an offensive line earlier on in the game. He's finding tendencies. He's doing his best to break tendencies so the defense can't tee off on us.

He's really smart. He's perfect for the job.

Q. In terms of adversity you had to get through this season, was the low point the Texas loss, the USF game?

TYLER BOOKER: Probably USF game. We don't want to disrespect one opponent. We don't want to take an opponent lightly. I feel like we did that going into that game. After that game, everybody looked at themselves individually, How do we want this season to end? There's only up from here. We were at the bottom. How are we going to rise? What are we going to do in order to rise, to get to where we want to get to?

Q. As an offensive starter, how much were you aware of who is going to start, what you're seeing in practice? How much in the know were you?

TYLER BOOKER: We're not really in the know for any of that. You know what I mean? Our job is to dominate our box, what we're supposed to do. All that is Coach Saban's decision. Our job is to dominate our box, but at the same time support whoever is back there, give them their full support like we got you, let's go ball, let's go win.

Q. Kady Proctor, did he have a light bulb moment at any point when he started playing a lot better?

TYLER BOOKER: I'm not sure if it was a light bulb moment. I think it was gradual success, him gradually



getting better, him being committed to getting better week by week.

I feel like the bye week was crucial for him. We were able to slow a lot of things down for him, go into depth on technique, what he needs to do in order to become the player he is today and continue to get better.

I feel like his approach taking it one week at a time, one day at a time, is what allow him to have so much success late in the season.

Q. What was the big technical point he had to change?

TYLER BOOKER: I don't think it was one big technical point. It was just really him focusing on technique and being consistent with it.

Day in and day out during practice, some plays, he's gotten a lot more consistent. I'm very proud of him for that. See how he progresses his career. The sky's the limit for him. He has all the physical intangibles. Great guy. Really smart. It just takes time. Some things take time.

Q. Adding headsets and tablets on the sideline, how do you think that will affect communication?

TYLER BOOKER: I think it will help a lot. You know what I mean? I was kind of surprised when I got to Alabama that we didn't have iPads because we had 'em in high school when I was at IMG. Being able to watch the players on the sideline was so beneficial for us even as a high school team being able to break down what we're seeing. When he's in this alignment, expect this. I feel like that will be a great advantage for everybody.

Q. You had big TVs on the sideline in high school?

TYLER BOOKER: No, we just had the iPads. Each position group had the iPads.

Q. Did you have to relearn some things in college?

TYLER BOOKER: It's not that I had to relearn things, it's I had to have a lot better play recall. Also somebody on the sideline taking notes of which play was which on the sideline, as well.

Q. How much of a priority was that for you guys this year, to reset the standard?

TYLER BOOKER: It was a big priority this year because we knew people counted us out after losing Bryce, Will, Jahmyr, people really were like, Oh, my gosh, what is this Alabama team going to look like? They already counted us

out before the Texas loss and the USF game.

Now being back to where we are, we just got to finish that job of proving that we're the standard. Have to do everything in our power to win this week, focus on that.

Being the standard, it really means a lot because that's why I came to Alabama, for the standard. To hear somebody challenge that on national TV, you're going to take that personally as a competitor. To go out and win that Georgia game, it meant a lot for me, but everybody in the program as well.

Q. You reestablished Alabama as the standard?

TYLER BOOKER: For sure. We have to continue to prove that, live up to that this Monday. We're going to do that by playing Alabama football.

Q. How do you try to balance not letting external factors impact you, but using that as motivation?

TYLER BOOKER: Usually have to find a good balance between it all. You have to find what is going to motivate you, what is going to distract you. You know what I mean?

I saw that during the national championship last year when I was sitting at home, had a lot of time to reflect, to look at external factors when I was sitting at home not playing. Just remembering that, let that drive me. It's all about how you process and channel what you let come to you.

Q. You're at home watching, David saying that right next to Coach Saban's face. How did you react?

TYLER BOOKER: Okay, we'll see (laughter). I think as a team we definitely came out and performed and showed that we are the standard during the SEC championship. You know what I mean? Georgia is a great football team. One of the best in the nation. In order for us to beat them essentially at home, how far from Athens, hour and a half, essentially at home, meant a lot.

Q. During the season are you going on Twitter to look at that stuff?

TYLER BOOKER: No. I'm trying to not. I'm on Instagram and TikTok because it is funny stuff to get away from it. When that stuff does pop up, you see it, but it's knowing about how to filter it out, what are you going to let take up your mental space.

I believe as people, you have only so much to give your energy to. Like, am I really going to give this my energy or scroll and keep having a good time on TikTok.

Q. Jalen, the tattoo that says Angel, is that new?

TYLER BOOKER: I believe so. I haven't asked him about it. I saw it. Jalen is flooded with tattoos. It's kind of hard to keep up.

Q. This week or...

TYLER BOOKER: I couldn't tell you.

Q. It just appeared?

TYLER BOOKER: Yeah.

Q. What about the relationship you built with JC?

TYLER BOOKER: Building a relationship with JC was a very crucial point in my life. JC is a brother of mine. My parents consider him a son. That's how close we are.

I was going through the IMG. It looks pretty good on the outside, but it's a pretty tough place to be. It's the Alabama of high school football. I say that because there's not much to do around there. You just really have to be built different in order to sustain and be away from your family, really just grow up in order to be a college student at 14, 15 years old. That's major.

Me and JC having that in common, seeing he came to Alabama and how much he matured, that was another reason of mine coming to 'Bama. Even on the offensive line now, we were brought up with some of the same core values of offensive line play and how football players are supposed to play, how the game of football is supposed to be played. Having that in common with him, that's just crucial to the relationship that we have. Also being leaders on this team. I'm very blessed to be playing with my brother.

Q. Was the personality click instant?

TYLER BOOKER: It was instant. As soon as I got there, me and JC, we were always together. You know what I mean? To be able to play with him now... It's really three of us, me, JC and Greg Crippen, offensive lineman for Michigan.

Man, it's a dream come true. I remember running sprints before practice just to get better. It's really great that we've all made it here. I'm really excited to see Greg on Monday, but most importantly I'm excited to ball out with JC and his game.

Q. Trash talk this week?

TYLER BOOKER: No. Greg and I were roommates actually. It's a mutual respect.

Q. And JC blocking for you?

TYLER BOOKER: JC Latham is the worst fullback of all time. I'll send you guys the clip. We were playing in Ravenwood, Tennessee. This is a funny story. We were playing in Tennessee. (Indiscernible) was the formation. It was just inside going to the right. All JC have to do is block somebody. He where I was. The person he was supposed to block is junior college. Funny that you bring that up.

J.J. handed me the ball. J.J. was the quarterback. That's a funny little story for you guys to talk about.

Q. Did junior get you?

TYLER BOOKER: Yeah, because JC whiffed.

Q. Do you maintain a relationship with J.J.?

TYLER BOOKER: We talk every now and then. I talked to him briefly when the Playoff was announced. Let's go compete, let's go ball out. We kind of left it at that.

Very excited to see him after the game.

Q. What do you remember about him from his time at IMG?

TYLER BOOKER: He's the ultimate leader. He's one of my favorite teammates of all time. He really taught me how to lead. There was one game where I was all hyped up, rah-rah. I ended up cramping because I was so hyped up.

He was like, Book, you can be like that, but you also have to balance it out, level it out.

Learning how to do that, learning how to balance and control my emotions, I kind of learned that from him. That's a life lesson from him. I've taught that to other people as well.

Having him in my life was very important. Grateful to have the time with him I did at IMG.

Q. Is there a funny story about J.J.?

TYLER BOOKER: One day when we got out of practice during fall camp. I remember J.J. dancing. He was dancing. I forgot how it even started. We always had a



great time with J.J. Being on the IMG team, it was a whole lot of fun.

Q. Is he a good dancer?

TYLER BOOKER: It was pretty funny.

Q. Funny doesn't mean good.

TYLER BOOKER: (Laughter).

Q. Are you guys enjoying you get a little bit of a different experience, didn't go to the Sugar Bowl, being in an historic game like this?

TYLER BOOKER: It's a very historic game. A blessing to be able to play in the Rose Bowl. My dad is a college football fanatic. He always dreamed of me playing in the Rose Bowl. So to be able to live this dream with him is very great.

One thing, something else I'm grateful for is that I don't have to drive out here. I saw the gas prices. That's insane. 4.39.

Q. 5 some places.

TYLER BOOKER: Traffic is bad. Oh, my God. I'm having a great time here, but I have a newfound appreciation for Tuscaloosa (laughter).

Q. Chase was saying there's fewer eruptions from Coach Saban this year. He listens more to players. Is he a different coach than he was when you first got here?

TYLER BOOKER: He's been the same since I've been here. You have to ask one of the older players. You have to ask them because this is the only Coach Saban I've known.

He's still Coach Saban. He'll still turn up on you, but probably not as much as the old days.

Q. What do you feel like has softened him?

TYLER BOOKER: I don't feel like it's softening him. I feel like he's becoming wiser in a sense and finding different ways to communicate with players because as time goes on, people change. There's not a lot of those old school 'Bama players that eat dirt, chew glass (laughter). Not a lot of us left around.

He just has to learn how to communicate with people differently. I feel like he's done a great job of evolving as a

coach. I don't see him getting soft, I see it as him growing and finding different ways to communicate with him.

Q. What is a favorite story the older players told you of how it was back then?

TYLER BOOKER: That's family business right there (laughter).

Q. Aside from the personal connection, what did you think when you found out you were playing Michigan?

TYLER BOOKER: I was very excited because I knew what kind of defense Michigan had. You know what I mean? Statistically they're the number one defense in the nation. They present a lot of exotic blitzes on third down. Most importantly, they have a great defensive front. Top to bottom, they're very technically sound, athletically gifted and move really well. It's going to be a challenge for us. We're excited to go towards it.

Q. Is that a motivation, number one defense?

TYLER BOOKER: Definitely, it's motivation just to go out and perform against them. It's always great to get a gauge of where you are as an offense or who you really are as a team. You really get those gut checks, those heart checks when you play a team like Michigan.

That's why you come to a school like Alabama, to play in these high-level games.

Q. Bigger isn't always better. You are certainly bigger and often better than the other team. When you have a front five that's as solid as you are, does that change how you play?

TYLER BOOKER: It doesn't really change how we play. We still want to come out and have that same mindset. It's not like we're running the ball more because we can't pass it.

I attribute that to our strength and conditioning staff because they've prepared us. We've gotten so much stronger in the off-season, put on so much muscle. That's why the weight has gone up.

It's great to go out there and ball and have all this new strength. Shout out to the strength and conditioning staff.

Q. Was that a focus that Coach Saban and the strength staff said we need to hit hard in the off-season?

TYLER BOOKER: I don't think it was an emphasis that

Coach Saban put on it. I feel like it was an emphasis that we as an offensive line put on it. We have to be the biggest offensive line in the country. We did that by challenging with each other, competing with each other every day during summer workouts. Everything we did was a competition.

Q. Does Michigan's defense remind you of anybody you played this season?

TYLER BOOKER: Not really. I don't like to get into comparing one team to another because then you fall into the trap of, Michigan is going to do this, this team going to do this.

Like I said, they're the number one defense in the nation for a reason. We have to go out, perform, not waste time comparing them to anybody else.

Q. What is one thing that really popped when you watched them?

TYLER BOOKER: How technically sound their defensive front is, all the blitzes they bring. They bring a lot of exotic blitzes. You have to stay on your toes, stay strict to your rules, communicate.

One of our offensive line plays is being able to communicate. The more you communicate, the better you're able to pick up what they throw at you.

Q. (No microphone.)

TYLER BOOKER: It doesn't change anything really. We just have to go to a different location to watch the film. We're all still watching the film as we would before a game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports