

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Friday, December 29, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Sherrone Moore

Press Conference

Q. What's the biggest difference between being a coordinator and being a head coach, which obviously is something you learned on the job quite a bit this year.

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, the biggest difference is that when you're the head coach you got to talk with the reps a lot, and that communication can be positive, can be a little negative.

But I try to manage that as best as possible, but making the decisions on the fly in those situations, as a coordinator, especially going for it on 4th down, when you have a head coach there you're counting on him. When you're the head coach you kind of make that call yourself.

But me and Coach, we have the same mindset of how we would call it, how we would do it in those situations. Those are the biggest differences going from just a coordinator to the head coach.

Q. How about the analytics aspect of that? Some coaches lean heavily on analytics and some are more old-school about it. Is there anything between you and Coach Harbaugh on that?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I think we used that. It's available to us, we use it, but there's also a human element to all of that, how is the game going, how is the flow going of the game, what's the situation, how aggressive do you want to be in this game versus how aggressive you want to be in the other game, how good is your defense.

We've got a really good defense. So you use those pieces, but we always use the analytics piece, as well.

Q. JJ was just in here. Where has he grown the most on the field, off the field from this time last year?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I mean, as a leader, first of



all, he's just taken the whole team by the grass and obviously he got voted MVP by his teammates, so that's a huge piece.

Then from a football standpoint he's just blossomed and continued to play at a high level. I'm just excited to see what he does, especially after all the weeks of prep going into this week. He's practiced phenomenal, he's practiced fast, practiced fun. He feels good, he feels healthy, and just excited to see where he is on Monday.

Q. What are the challenges of game prep when you have Dallas Turner on the edge, Chris Braswell on the other, and all the talent they have in the secondary?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, it's not just those two, it's the linebackers, it's the corners, it's the safeties, it's the D-tackles, the whole team. They're two really, really good players, so we're really excited for the challenge. We've got to have a great plan to attack those players, to attack every player that they have on the field.

But for us, it's really about us, what can we do, how can we execute, and our plan is to just execute at a high level and play with great detail and great fundamentals.

Q. Trevor Keegan just now described the 9 on 7 periods, the beat Ohio period as something out of the battle scene from the movie 300. How would you describe what those sessions are like?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, pretty similar. It's a lot of pads popping, a lot of noise, loud music, a lot of violence. Sometimes there's people on the ground; sometimes there's not. But it's physicality at its finest, and the players love it, the coaches love it, and I think it's kind of molded us and built us to what we've been the past couple years and what we need to be going forward.

Q. What went into the decision to first implement that period?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, that was Coach. Everybody does 9 on 7, but I think the big piece for us was making it live tackle. It was a big decision -- actually you find from a



safety standpoint it's actually better than doing what people call the thud just because you have less injuries. People know they are going to tackle, they are going to run harder, they're not going to be hesitant. Guys are going to be more physical at the point of attack.

It's been a good thing for us, and we'll continue to do it.

Q. JJ said he felt like this year heading into this game the focus and preparation has been different. How have you seen that?

SHERRONE MOORE: I think the guys are very unsatisfied with everything that's gone on this past year. They're craving more. They want more. The goal has been set from the very beginning on what they want, and they're not satisfied until they get it.

You can see every day in practice they're very hungry.

Q. How has everything else that's happened this season played into that mentality?

SHERRONE MOORE: I mean, everybody knows and sees it, the outside noise, but the motivating factor for us has not been that. The motivating factor has been to win every game and do whatever we need to do to win every game.

All the outside noise, all the outside pieces we just brush off. We're very locked into each other, who we are, what we're going to do and how we're going to attack everybody.

Q. In a lot of games this year, Ole Miss, Tennessee, LSU, Alabama has taken explosive first half offenses and really shut it down with their defense in the second half. How do you approach that or balance that for a game?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I don't think you can hold anything in this game. I think it's all bets are off. You've got to play physical. You've got to play to win, and that's what we're going to go do.

Q. How much game planning can realistically be done during a halftime period?

SHERRONE MOORE: I don't know how much game planning you can change. I think you can adjust, make changes to things you've done or that you have planned, but you have a game plan, you have it set, you've got a month to prepare for it.

You have to be able to adjust on the fly with the things that you have.

Q. You guys are also having players stop watching film on their iPads; what went into doing that?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, just caught wind of things that could be going on, and just told our kids, I think it was early November, hey, we're not watching stuff on the iPads anymore. Watch it in-house and handle it that way.

Q. Is that something you guys decided internally to do, or was it something like the CFP got to you or catapult said --

SHERRONE MOORE: No, it's something we decided from our own perspective that people heard some things and we wanted to make sure that we were safe on our end.

Q. You said it started in early November?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, started in November sometime.

Q. You guys fell behind by two scores pretty quickly in both the previous two semifinal games. How important will it be to you guys to get off to a hot start on Monday?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I think any game it is, especially a game of this magnitude with these type of teams. You've got to be able to start fast, and our games that we've won these past years, we have, so we've got to continue to do that on Monday.

Q. What's the dialogue like with Coach Harbaugh when you're making decisions for this offense?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I think the biggest piece, he lets me be me as far as calling the game, and he just allows us and tells us when it is time for us to have a plan to be able to go for it, when it's not, when he's thinking punt, when he's thinking kick a field goal.

Just very general, that piece of letting us know his thought process as the drive goes.

Q. JJ was just telling us how you're very personable with the players. Is that an approach that you intentionally take with them?

SHERRONE MOORE: Absolutely. I always tell kids, especially even kids coming from high school, that I want them to play like they played on their highlight film. I want them to play at that elite level.

When you get here, I want you to play at that level. You've got to be you. I can't let you be anything else outside of

you.

Obviously you've got to change. You've got to be stronger. You've got to be faster. You've got to be quicker. All those things, and you've got to learn the playbook.

But at the end of the day I want the kids to be themselves, and if you try to get them out of that, that is when you get players that play scared, tentative, and you want them to play aggressive and physical.

Q. How much have you settled in as the coach in four games, but the last one was pretty darned important? How did you settle in as just a leader of men, I guess?

SHERRONE MOORE: I mean, Coach was there all week. I think for me in that game there was a moment where I just sat there. I think the Seven Nation Army plays before the game at home, and I just kind of looked around and I was just like, all right, here we go.

I looked at the players, I looked around at the stadium, and I remember looking back because my mom was at the game, and I looked at my mom and then I just nodded and I was like, all right, here we go.

You just trust in the players. The players give you full confidence, too, to call the game however you want to call it and make the decisions, and those kids really -- they're the reason why it was easier for me than it probably would have been.

Q. You were really emotional at Penn State. Nothing could have prepared you for that postgame interview on television. What kind of feedback did you get from that? Because it was really raw, really honest.

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, the emotion was real. Obviously the situation what happened, we were coming off the plane, we hear about it, and it's a whole other deal.

Just the hard work that these kids have put in this whole year, and for a moment like that against a really good football team at their place to -- people try to kind of put our backs against the wall, which is kind of what these kids feed off of, and to watch them play the way they did, it just got to me.

For our team, for our head coach, I wanted to win that game so bad for him, for them, and that's what they did. That's where that emotion came from. I don't shy away from it.

A lot of positives. There's some negative, which I don't really care about. I don't really care about what other

people say about it. Made sure I talked to my mom about it and that's what really mattered. But was excited for our team and what position it put us in.

Q. You also have an agent, I'm sure. Can you portray maybe how an interest level in you has progressed in the industry?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I mean, I'm not going to comment on any of that stuff. I'm just really ready for this game on Monday. That's all I'm focused on, locked in on, and just ready for this one.

Q. You were talking about being personable with the players. Do you think Jim is intentionally trying to become more personable with players the last couple years?

SHERRONE MOORE: I think he's done an amazing job since he's been here. He's just done a phenomenal job interacting with the players, being there for the players, being with the players, and bringing them in, not only from a football standpoint but with his family.

You can see the players taking more to him and being with him. Coach, I try to emulate him in a lot of things he does. He is his own person. He's very special, the best head coach in the country in my eyes, the best leader of men in my eyes, a man of pride, a man of faith, a man of truth.

I just love being around Coach Harbaugh and am very inspired by him in everything that he does.

Q. What do you think is his best trait if you had to pick one?

SHERRONE MOORE: I don't know if I could pick one. He's so elite at so many things. It's hard to pick one for me because he is just such a great quarterback all around.

Q. All the attention on Jalen?

SHERRONE MOORE: I mean, yeah, but we're not really -- the whole hype and all that, we're not really worried about that. We're just ready to go play.

Q. You were asked earlier about the catapult system. Do you think that's something that needs to be looked at in the off-season, because it seems like that's a pretty widespread concern from other teams?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I'm sure it will be, but really just focused on this game. All that stuff will get taken care of.

Q. How does that impact your preparation? Is it a loss that you guys aren't able to do that --

SHERRONE MOORE: No, guys are in the building probably as much as they are at home, maybe even more sometimes. So I don't think it impacts -- it impacts the fact that they can't watch it at their houses and lay on their own beds sometimes.

Maybe it might help, because if they did, the next thing high would be to play Call of Duty, so maybe it does help that way.

Q. How much has Jim tweaked the approach after the last two trips?

SHERRONE MOORE: I think we have a mature team that can handle more time, more things to themselves, and really the guys are -- this is not a bowl trip for them. This is a business trip. The guys have taken that approach.

When they're not doing football physically, they're doing it mentally or they're recovering with their bodies. That's it. The guys can handle so much more time to themselves.

Coach has done a great job with the schedule throughout this whole bowl prep of allowing them that time and allowing coaches the prep time, but also allowing the time when we do need to meet as a group and as a unit and as a team.

It's been a really good schedule, and I'm just excited to see what happens on Monday.

Q. He mention at all his time at the Rose Bowl when he was a player here?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, talked about it a little bit. He doesn't like to talk about himself too much. We try to make him talk about himself because he was a pretty good player. I can't remember what game -- maybe it was -- it was an away game, but we pulled out his highlight tape and he was so happy about it.

I was like, Coach, you're a dog, bro. But he talked a little bit but not very much.

Q. Drake Nugent seems to have a really good ability to block in space, reach the second level, the reach box, all that stuff. Can you comment on his footwork and how rare that is for a center?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, he's an elite athlete with super twitch. Was an under-recruited guy, and just wish he'd been here for a long time.

But the kid is super smart, super physical, plays with great fundamentals, but he's also super twitchy and athletic. So he has that rare ability to make plays out in space, which guys usually don't have a good feel for it, so just excited we have him.

Q. A lot of seniors, a lot of guys with experience. That probably helped you leading up to it, but also does it lead to not a desperation, but almost like got to do it now because it will be not a completely different team but a pretty much different team next year?

SHERRONE MOORE: No, I mean, for us really, nobody is really worried about anything but that day. Today we're just worried about practice today and what we can do to win that day. That's about it.

Q. Speaking of Drake, he said he didn't practice for a couple weeks. Obviously playing without Zach. Are you confident (regarding Alabama front)?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, they're a great front. He's practiced the past couple days, actually this past week, so looked pretty good.

That time has really helped us for him to heal. He played with an ankle issue in the Iowa game, and so toughed it out. If we had to play again the next week, he would've played, but this time has been great for him and he's back to full speed.

Q. What impresses you the most about Alabama's front?

SHERRONE MOORE: Just how physical they are, how stout they are, how fundamentally sound they are with their physicality and talent. Excited to see what happens on Monday.

Q. I know Turner and Braswell get a lot of the attention coming off the edge, but from 92, what do you see on film?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, big strong dude. Plays tough. Plays hard. Plays with great hand placement. Understands where he fits in gaps and pressures and blitzes, they play him inside, outside, play him with 4, play him as a 5.

So knowing where he is other guys huge challenge for us.

Q. (Indiscernible) a lot of draft hopefuls. How much are you branding this game as a proving opportunity on that front just knowing the talent Alabama has?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, for us we're going to try to get the guys the ball that are going to try to help us win. That's all we're worried about.

Q. Around the country December has become kind of an off-season month, transfer portal, draft declaration

SHERRONE MOORE: Not with our guys.

Q. What did you think of the job Trente Jones did stepping in at right tackle in the Big Ten Championship game?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I think he did a great job and he has continued to progress as this month has went on, gotten more comfortable. He's been a guy that's played a lot of snaps for us already, so excited to see how Trente does on Monday. Practiced really well, so we're excited to see the progression.

Q. Was it an easy decision when Zach went out to slide a tackle to guard and bring Trente on?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, always want the six best guys, whoever those five best guys are, and we knew Trente was the next guy in, so it was easy for us to do that.

Q. Jalen Milroe said yesterday that Bill O'Brien asked him to switch positions. Not talking about Jalen specifically, but in your career, how have you dealt with stereotypes of Black people in football and the limitations that are forced upon them?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, really I don't see color. My wife is Caucasian. My kids are mixed. I deal with Black, white. I've lived in Kansas where you can be in the house with the door open at 12:00, and New Jersey where you have to be in the house by 6:00. I've seen all cogs of the spectrum. I don't really focus on any of that piece.

I know it's out there. I know it's a stereotype. Coach Harbaugh is a great example. His last offensive coordinators have all been African-American, and that's not something that's big in this sport.

For me, it's not about color, it's not about that, and we're just trying to find the best players that play and know that that's out there but not really worried about that.

Q. How if your experience as a junior college player shape your coaching journey?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, I got to see in junior college,

I went to Butler County Junior College in Kansas, small town in El Dorado, and it was a really cool experience because I got to see what happens when you don't have a lot and got to experience those venues against some talented players.

My quarterback was Zac Taylor, who is now head coach of the Bengals and was the Big 12 Player of the Year, and I played with 18 guys that went Division I on my team.

Got to see what happens when you don't have a lot with a lot of talented guys and how you can grow camaraderie in a group in that setting. Really shaped me from a cultural standpoint but also from a football standpoint, around some really good players.

Q. When you have all the trappings of a program like Michigan, all the stuff, how do you boil it down to that kind of relationship like you had at JuCo?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, when you have a great leader, when you have great culture, when you have great brotherhood, it kind of does it itself. We don't focus on anything but the players, the people in the building, your family, God. When you do that, it's pretty easy to do.

Q. What are your early impressions of Jaden Davis now that he's practicing again?

SHERRONE MOORE: Yeah, it's been great, man. Smart, tactical, great arm, accurate. He's going to be a really good player for us.

Q. What stands out about Alabama's corners when you watch them on tape?

SHERRONE MOORE: Physical, fast, long, very athletic, and excited for the challenge.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

