

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Friday, December 29, 2023  
Pasadena, California, USA

## Michigan Wolverines Colston Loveland

### Press Conference

#### Q. How was the trip?

COLSTON LOVELAND: Good.

#### Q. Compared to last year, which one do you like more?

COLSTON LOVELAND: I don't know. I like this one. Probably this one.

#### Q. Growing up, is Idaho like California markets for sports teams? Like, what have you grown up watching, the Rose Bowl?

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, for sure. I would say it's just West Coast in general.

#### Q. What's your favorite like childhood Rose Bowl memory, if any?

COLSTON LOVELAND: I don't know. Just thinking of the stadium. My parents were really big into it. Just Pasadena, being in the warm weather, the mountains, the whole vibe, it's pretty cool.

#### Q. This year, it's been you and AJ for the most part. Tight end-wise, it's a big room, some of the younger guys, next year, when AJ is presumably not here, who could be stepping up into those roles?

COLSTON LOVELAND: Man, Marlin's pretty good. He's been doing pretty good.

#### Q. What's he do? He showed up in spring game, but you don't really see him throughout the year much. What's he do that stands out?

COLSTON LOVELAND: He's fast. He's like -- I think he ran a 10.7 or something in high school. Good ball skills. Big. Just everything. Got it all. A freshman, Zack Marshall



is doing good.

#### Q. He's like a room favorite. Zach Marshall?

COLSTON LOVELAND: He's a good guy, really good guy. Hibby, Matt Hibner. Really everyone in the room is doing really good. Like Josh Beetham is doing really well. All of them. But I think Marlin will have a big jump for sure.

#### Q. When you see their safeties, No. 2 and 13 and 6, what stands out about those guys?

COLSTON LOVELAND: They're pretty good box safeties, fill the run pretty good. Athletic guys, can cover ground. I like the match-up, for sure. It will be exciting to see how it goes, for sure.

#### Q. Nick Saban called you a match-up nightmare, something along those lines. Do you feel it's been that way all season? What I'm looking at, it feels like any team's linebackers, any team's safeties are going to struggle against Michigan tight ends and running backs. Do you feel that personally?

COLSTON LOVELAND: I feel like all year it's kind of been like that. Not a lot of safeties I feel can really guard me. A lot of the safeties you see are box safeties. They more probably play the run a lot better than they do coverage. They've got some good safeties, but I'm ready to get after them, for sure.

#### Q. What's AJ brought to this offense? Seems like this year more than ever you guys are using multiple tight ends, and you two are kind of the perfect yin and yang?

COLSTON LOVELAND: He's brought a lot. He's super physical. You see him in the run game. He's one of the best, if not the best run game tight ends probably in the country.

And the same in the pass game. Just super, super dynamic, good ball skills. Good separation. He's a great guy in the room to have, too. Did a really good job of getting him here for sure.



**Q. Did it surprise you at all, his ability in the run game? I feel like when he came in, a lot of what we heard from Indiana fans, he's not a great end-line blocker, and then he gets to Michigan and he's fantastic?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I don't think they asked him to do a lot end-line blocking over there. But he's like 6'7", like 255, 260, whatever. He's huge. He does a really good run game and the pass game.

**Q. (Indiscernible)?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Hope so.

**Q. Can run it back next year?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, I mean there's a lot of factors that will go into it. But he'll make the right decision, whatever it is.

**Q. What's your favorite song that he sings, like maybe in the huddle before you guys come out? Couple guys are saying that he gets you guys really going. Like, retro or something?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: It's time to play the game.

**Q. But I don't think we've asked you.**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Every time we walk out, like pre -- in the tunnel, he'll be, like, it's time to play the game, you know what I'm saying?

**Q. Is he one of more fiery guys? Who is one of the more fiery guys on offense?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: He is. Max Bredeson. Blake Corum obviously. And the O line, all the O line is pretty fiery. Everyone has fire, that's for sure.

**Q. Roman Wilson mentioned that you guys aren't watching film on your iPads anymore. Turned off yesterday. What are you guys doing to watch film together? What do you guys do to prepare?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I mean, we just watch film as a unit, positions, a lot of film. Nowadays with everyone being able to get into wherever, it's good that we shut the iPads down. But we're watching plenty of film with the coaches and just as a team.

**Q. Is it kind of frustrating that you also have to take those precautions, and I guess the voices around are**

**kind of talking about you're the only ones that are still --**

COLSTON LOVELAND: You could say it's frustrating, but I mean it doesn't really matter if everyone is doing it. We're going to get the film in either way. It's not a huge deal.

**Q. Can I talk to you about Gooding, Idaho? I'm very intrigued -- Bountiful, Utah is where I grew up. Tell me what life was like growing up there, playing sports and what you were doing there?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: It was a small town. Originally from Bliss, Idaho, which is like 300 people, 400 people. Moved to Gooding, never moved, but went to school in Gooding in the third grade, because that was the bigger school, they were better at sports. Played basketball, baseball, football, wrestled for a little bit, track for a little. But it was like --

**Q. That's why your feet are so good, very athletic, did a lot of different things?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, parents always had me in everything.

**Q. Were you a good wrestler?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I was pretty good. But this is probably like fourth grade. I was young. I was pretty good.

**Q. Then just your mobility. The way you sit in the routes and get out and your hips, where do you think your mobility comes from?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I mean, the strength staff helps us get that right for sure. But I think it's also from mom and dad, maybe, just being born with pretty good hips.

**Q. Were they athletic people? Did they play sports?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: My dad played basketball. He was a basketball guy. My mom wasn't much of an athlete.

**Q. What did your family do in Bliss? Were they farming?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: My dad is an electrician. Mom did some bills for this office. For a minute, my dad worked on a farm, had some cows. Ended up getting down with that. But my grandparents and all my cousins and everything, they're all big in rodeo, owned a bunch of land and had a head of cows.

**Q. Did you do any rodeo stuff?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, when I was younger, third, fourth, maybe fifth grade, I did some rodeo. I did the goat-tying, like the little-kid events. I was never doing team roping, none of that. But like riding calves and stuff.

**Q. I heard about your last media availability connection with J.J. Tell me a little bit about what you guys do off the field away from the eyes and where does the chemistry come from?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Just hanging out, like summer, we did a lot of golfing, just getting out, doing whatever, just having a good time, building that friendship. We'll play cards or play Uno, whatever it is.

But, no, I love that guy. And he's always a great leader and kind of gets everyone where they need to be.

**Q. Who is the most competitive? Who is the best at these things? Who is the better golfer?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: It was back and forth for a little bit there. But J.J. is probably the better golfer. I'll give him that. I did beat him one time, though. I did beat him one time.

**Q. Just keys to success for you. Why do you think you've kind of blossomed into this really steady, great tight end?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I think it starts with the mindset, just always wanting to get better and always knowing there's a lot more to improve, because, I mean, like you said, I had a pretty good season thus far, but there's still a lot I need to prove and a lot of opportunities I could have made happen a bit better.

But I think that and just the people I'm surrounded by -- coaches, strength staff, teammates -- they make it easy to want to work more, work harder and just get better every day.

**Q. Biggest area of improvement for you this year?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: As far as my game?

**Q. Uh-huh.**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I think probably route running is one of them. And I think the run game, too, blocking.

**Q. When you look at the game film, do they look like any team you've played this season?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: They're their own team. Obviously good defense, great team, well-coached. But I would say just as far as like maybe athletes and how they move around, maybe Penn State. But like I said, they're their own team. But excited to get out there.

**Q. What stands out about their pass rushers?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Well-coached, pretty good with their hands. When they give them space, they can get something going for sure. But we've seen some pretty good edge rushers thus far. We've got to do a good job and use the right technique and get on them early.

**Q. Did Coach Moore coach you when he was with the tight end group?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: No, that was later. Coach Jay Harbaugh, he recruited me. When I got here, Coach Newsome was the tight ends coach.

**Q. What do you think you learned from last year's playoff experience? And how do you hope that leads into this and what do you think you can learn from heading into this match-up?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I think just -- last year I think it was a lack of focus, execution, obviously. We messed up on some things. Can't have any turnovers in games like these. Everyone's got to be on point.

I think that's just one thing that we've been focused on is just, like, we've got to be going in there, everything perfect. All the little details, really focusing on them. And I think that's one thing that we learned from last year.

**Q. And hearing Nick Saban bringing you up individually, that they might need to double team you and pinpoint you, how does it make you feel? Does it make you feel like you're a potential X factor in this game?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, I think it's cool to get noticed. If they have to do whatever they've got to do, it should open up other things, too. But, yeah, I'm ready for a great challenge. It's going to be a good challenge. They've got some good safeties. They're going to have a good plan, but I think I can be an X factor in this game.

**Q. Mentioned the safeties. J.J. was complimentary of Caleb Downs, their freshman. What stands out about him when you're watching him on tape?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: He's a freshman, first off, which is pretty cool for them. I think he's got 90-something tackles,

whatever. That's pretty rare seeing a freshman doing all that. So props to him for that.

Yeah, I'm ready. We've got a good game plan, so we'll see how we can attack them.

**Q. What did the (inaudible) season, Michigan, (indiscernible) you guys talking in the locker room together, (indiscernible) some stuff?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Everyone kind of thinks we were going into it a lot more than we were. As a player and as a team, we weren't really worried about it. It was like, we couldn't control it. It was not that big of a deal. It was a little annoying.

But coaches and strength staff did a good job of just reminding us that we can't change anything, and we've still got to go out there and win. It never really affected us a whole lot. But I would say, yeah, it brought us as a university and as just a fan base and team together, for sure.

**Q. Does it feel like Coach Harbaugh kind of embraced that position? Seems like he does relish being sort of the "us against them" kind of thing.**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, he took that, for sure. If you don't have anything good to say about us or don't support us, saying bad things, it's all right, we don't really need you, you know what I mean? It's us versus everyone who doesn't want to see us succeed. So I think he took that and took that and ran with it, for sure.

**Q. Did that give the team kind of an edge that, not that it was missing, but something that you feel like you guys needed in the season?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I would say I think it gave us an edge, but I think we always had that edge, yeah.

**Q. What can you say about Donovan in the past month? He's been utilized most effectively in the passing game. How have you seen him practicing this past month?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Good. Same old Dono. Doing his thing, making plays, practicing hard, yeah.

**Q. For Donovan, seems he's kind of one of those personalities that gets people going. Is that something you have experienced that you feel that his personality has kind of like pumped you up at times?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, for sure. Like ever since I

got here, he's always showing love. Always has a good attitude. Lighting up the room. He's been consistent with that for sure.

**Q. At points he'll play with the media, tap shoulders, do you have any funny stories about Donovan that you can remember?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Nothing that I can remember. Just one that comes to mind was that Big Ten Championship last year, his interview, he was like, sheesh, doing all that, that was funny.

**Q. I know you weren't there for the Georgia game two years ago, but Michigan's fallen behind by two scores pretty quickly in these playoff games. How important will it be for you guys to start quickly and (inaudible)?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Very important, I think, just games like these, you've got to play good ball. You've got to stay on schedule. No penalties. No turnovers. Just play really detailed, and I think we've done a good job in our preparation this fall, and we just need to keep it going.

**Q. Do you interact with new enrollees, Brady (inaudible) is he fully like meshed with you guys at this point?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, he's meshed. He's giving Sky looks too. But he's in the meetings. He's been really good so far. Obviously it's early and he's got a lot to learn. But he's a good kid, big kid, too. He's going to be good.

**Q. See a difference in J.J. compared to last year?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Pretty different, for sure. He's always been that guy. But the one thing that I've noticed is just a little more comfortable -- I wouldn't say comfortable, but confident, and more of a leader, vocal leader, and showing.

But he's grown, and his game has just gotten better. He understands the game more. Coverages. The sky's the limit for him.

**Q. Were you able to see a difference in him when Coach Harbaugh was out during the game, versus when he was around?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: No, I didn't see a difference.

**Q. Were you an early enrollee?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yes.

**Q. Talking to Brady or other early enrollees, what's the most important lesson you would give them, as like welcome to Michigan?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I would say don't do too much or too early, you know what I'm saying? Just you want to be that "don't worry about guy," where no one has to worry about you. Like as an early guy, as a freshman, you don't really need to talk a lot. You know what I'm saying? Just know your role, work hard. Once it comes around, take advantage of the opportunity.

**Q. Is it weird to you that you're like three classes removed from him? Like you're going into your third year, a guy like Brady is like an older guy now? To me I still think he's like a freshman.**

COLSTON LOVELAND: No, it's crazy, time is flying. Time is flying.

**Q. You guys been doing anything fun?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Went to Disneyland. Beef Bowl, ate a lot of meat yesterday. There's like a comedian show tonight. It's been pretty chill.

**Q. Brady and J.J. talked about Caleb Downs hitting. How is he (inaudible) maybe somebody who may be covering you as well?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I think he's good in coverage, for sure. I think every safety in this Final Four, top four teams are good in coverage and good in the run game. But as a freshman doing a good job this fall. And I think I'll be able to -- I'm a good player, too, obviously, so I think it will be exciting. Good match-up.

**Q. Did you look at his tape and see he's a freshman and see what he's able to do?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: Yeah, it's definitely crazy. It's rare, for sure. But these days, freshman are doing a lot of things. But he's a damn good player, for sure.

**Q. I'm sure you care if Coach Harbaugh comes back. Do you want to ask him?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I never really asked him. I would love him to come back, for sure. Great coach. I know whatever he does, it's going to be the best thing for him and it will be love no matter what.

**Q. That's a distraction, different kinds of distraction, why have you guys been so focused, incredible attention to detail to get to this point, but all of this**

**other stuff?**

COLSTON LOVELAND: I think it's just -- I mean, how the culture is and how our coaches engrave that mindset into our mind of just like all the outside stuff, noise. But I think just that and, like, we can't control anything that's happening during the season. So it's, like, we're going to go out there and play. Regardless I think we've done a good job adapting that mindset, too.

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