

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

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Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Trevor Keegan

Press Conference

Q. Trevor, just doing a story on the team's NIL programs and kind of how they got here. Can you just maybe describe what role you think -- obviously it's something that everybody has. But I guess the Champions Circle and Hail! Impact and the One More Year Fund, can you just describe those?

TREVOR KEEGAN: I feel like every team in college football has a different approach to NIL. I feel like Michigan's a little different and honestly special because it kind of relates to the real world. You've got to work to earn your money.

I know schools all around the country, they're giving money to players up front and stuff, offering big money, try to get recruits and trying to get families to want to come to their institution. But I feel like with Michigan, if you get there and you're playing well, you're going to get paid. You're going to get NIL. You're going to get endorsements. You're going to see companies -- companies are going to see you on the biggest stage.

I feel like it's a really cool thing because not everything's guaranteed to you in life. I know some kids from other schools, they get promised money up front or they don't get it. That's kind of the reason why the transfer portal is going a little crazy right now. It's unfortunate, but I really do think Michigan is doing it the correct way.

I feel like it makes the young kids on our team, the freshmen and sophomores are even more hungry to get onto the field, shine under the lights and on the biggest stage. So it's pretty cool.

Q. How much of a factor was it in you coming back this year?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Yeah, it wasn't a crazy factor. It was in the back of my head that I wanted to come back. It was just something that was almost like a reward, and I was



grateful for it. It's really cool to be in college, have a little extra money. It's really cool. But it wasn't like the number one reason why I came back. It's to come back and win a National Championship and be with my teammates and coaches.

You only get so many years in college. So that was kind of the main thing for me.

Q. You've been here several years. Could you just describe the role Sherrone Moore played in kind of toughening up the O-line and kind of the whole team.

TREVOR KEEGAN: Most definitely. It was after COVID. We went 2-4. We were not a good football team. We weren't tough. We were sloppy. Nobody cared. Nobody wanted to be in Schembechler hall. It was some dark days because you're playing for Michigan and you're supposed to be on the biggest stage and you're seeing what fans are saying, you're seeing what the media is saying, you're seeing that our coach might get fired and stuff like that.

You've got the constant, you can't really be with the guys outside the facility because it's COVID. There were some really dark days that we had to get through.

After the season, Coach Harbaugh sent us a long e-mail saying that we're going to change this program together. Our first team view was you're getting on the train and moving or you're getting off. Some guys decided to transfer. Since then, we've been working our tails off to get where we are and have the success we've had.

I think it pays tribute to Coach Moore as well. When he first got in here, he told us straight up front and addressed the elephant in the room that the offensive line has to be the leaders of the team. They have to be the tough ones. The team only goes as far as the offensive line goes.

Just him as a young coach, his drive and determination to get to where he is. When I got in here, he was the tight ends coach. So just seeing his success, I mean, going to O-line coach, going to co-OC and now offensive coordinator and getting head coaching job offers all around the country, it's really special. Just how hungry he is, it



really affects us, and we see that. So it's cool.

Q. How do you see the toughness manifest itself in games after that turning point?

TREVOR KEEGAN: It's really all mental. Coach Herb has trained us all mentally for those moments in the off-season. We don't know what's coming during a lift.

We could show up, we could be at a hill two miles away, we could be submerged in a cold tub and then doing conditioning, like we never know. So it's cool, and he's trained us for this moment. It's awesome.

Q. We've heard from some of the defensive guys yesterday about the beat Georgia/Ohio State periods. What are those like for you guys as an offense?

TREVOR KEEGAN: It's a physical period. It's really not as much about technique. It's about beating the man in front of you. I feel like that has been a culmination of where our toughness came from.

Those periods, it's damn near not even football. It's smashmouth, like my guy in front of me isn't tackling the ball carrier. It's really cool. I feel like it's a huge thing for our success. I remember our first beat Ohio drill in spring ball 2021. It was like I couldn't even describe to you. It was like Battle 300 or something, like Sparta. I'm telling you it was insane.

I feel that's really trickled down. That drill has been a huge thing for our success.

Q. Do you guys do that once a week? Or how often do you guys?

TREVOR KEEGAN: We do it once a week, if not two. We did it, I believe, yesterday. We did the beat 'Bama drill. After we beat Ohio State, we switched it to the team. So it was beat 'Bama this week.

Q. I guess it was rotated. Wasn't it beat Georgia at one point?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Correct, yes.

Q. The Sports Illustrated story at the start of the year on NIL, you said you really aren't a social media guy. How has that kind of, I guess, played out for you this season? You also play a position that's not in the spotlight.

TREVOR KEEGAN: Just me personally, I've never been a guy to always post on social media and get my name out

there, but there's been some companies that have asked me to do a lot of posts or Instagram reels and stuff like that. I don't even know how to do that honestly. So I kind of just didn't like really want to go with the companies.

I know a lot guys on the team or a lot of guys with social media, that's the route they want to take maybe, influencer-type. I don't really know how it goes. I feel like everybody's decision is different, but I'm not really a social media guy.

Q. Do you have a sense like is the money coming because you're good football players or because you're good at social media?

TREVOR KEEGAN: I assume good football players. I think it's just the block and us being on the biggest stage, people seeing us. Like JJ, for instance, he can't even go out around campus, that's how popular of a dude he is. I feel like everybody knows him.

If they want him to be part of their company and make a partnership, I would too because he's such a popular person. As an offensive lineman, I'm not going to be getting the big companies, and I understand that. Chipotle or something would be cool. (Laughter).

Q. Blake Corum hasn't really been a factor for you guys in these last two playoff games. He had only had three carries in the Georgia game. He was obviously hurt last year. What kind of a difference maker do you think he can be this time?

TREVOR KEEGAN: I think just the person he is and the role he has on this team, we depend on Blake, and he depends on us. That Georgia game, we play that game again, I don't know that team, I think they had eight first rounders. Their backups were first rounders. Their rotational players were first rounders.

Obviously he was hurt last TCU. But we've really honed in on our details and everything this bowl prep, and less as much physical but more on the mental aspect.

I feel like in past years we've -- it's a long season. Past years we've kind of been mentally out of it, and I feel like last year we kind of overlooked TCU, and we saw everything in the media, how they run the 3-3-5. Oh, Michigan's run for 300 yards. But they showed us stuff we haven't even seen on film and it was a complete change. I feel like we weren't mentally ready.

I feel like this year we did a great job of that, honing in on the details and technique and really studying our opponents. We're really excited about this opportunity, and

I think we're ready.

Q. Do you see that about Alabama, something similar, or they are who they are? Do you see something similar to that?

TREVOR KEEGAN: It depends. It's Alabama. We could get anything. They're a great coaching staff, great players. It depends. I know most games we'll see everybody's best shot, which I know we're going to get this game and the magnitude of this game. Even in Big Ten play, the first half we'll see something completely different than we haven't seen on film. We've got to adjust and play it by ear and get the things rolling on the sideline and make sure we're on our Ps and Qs.

Q. Where have you seen Trente grow the most over the past few weeks as he stepped into his role as a starter?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Just him knowing, hey, I'm a starter, I think that's been a huge thing for him, just his confidence. He's always been a great player. He's got the best feet out of all of this, the most athleticism. He can bend really well.

I think just him having the utmost confidence in himself will play a major role in this game. We most definitely have the confidence in him too. I mean, I've been with him since we were 18 years old, and I've seen the way he works. I've seen how much he cares about this game. I'm really excited for him to shine in this opportunity.

Q. What are the challenges of facing someone like Dallas Turner? How does he compare maybe to some of the guys you've seen this year?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Obviously we see him on film. We see all the accolades he's been getting. He's a really good player, explosive. Luckily I don't got to deal with him as much. Yeah, man, he's a great player. We're excited for the challenge.

These games, you get a first round draft pick that you're up against, it just makes you want to hone in on the details even more, watching more film, trying to get the littlest things to give you an advantage. I know our tackles have been doing that. Coach Moore, we've been watching really everything for the past month.

We're excited for the challenge. Like I said, they're well coached. That's where the details and the little things matter in these big games. I feel like we've been doing that, so we're excited.

Q. How much do players pay attention to the talk

about whether Coach Harbaugh is going to be back next year, his contract extension, all that stuff?

TREVOR KEEGAN: It's just a one-track mind right now. Every single year I've been here, that's always been a rumor. Honestly, our strength staff, they do such a great job, like we don't care. We know who Coach Harbaugh is.

Obviously there's been the NFL stuff up in the air and stuff like that, but we know he wants to win a National Championship, and that's all that matters right now.

Q. What has allowed you guys as a team, equipped you to get through everything -- those rumors, the NCAA stuff, the sign stealing allegations. How does the team get through everything?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Obviously it's been a challenge, there's no doubt about that. There's been obstacles we have to overcome, adversity. People can make all the allegations they want, but like even just a player who's been here, like the players are the ones who changed the program and the coaches.

We've really poured so much of our energy and our soul into this game and gave Michigan everything we had to try to turn this program around, which we did.

It was just making sure all the guys were focused during all these things because, I mean, like even when Coach Harbaugh -- we found out Coach Harbaugh got suspended three games, it was literally when we landed in Happy Valley against Penn State. Really? Like you couldn't have done this before? It's kind of like a little shot in the back, but I think it just pays tribute to the leadership we have on this team.

Obviously we have six captains, but I feel like the coaches have just recruited natural leaders. I feel like every dude on offense, defense, special teams is a natural born leader, and everybody has a say on this team. It's not like the six of us are like, oh, we're the captains, no, like everybody's a leader. We've got all dudes who have seen football, played football.

Just how close the locker room is as well. All these moments we've come together and like beating Penn State in Happy Valley without Coach Harbaugh, it just meshes our team closer and closer. The dudes in the locker room, they're my best friends. Some of them are going to be in my wedding. It's really special.

Like I said, Coach Herb and the staff, they prepared us for these moments. So it's really cool.



Q. What has Coach done to keep you guys in step? What has he done in the past to sort of keep you guys in step for most of this?

TREVOR KEEGAN: He's not much of a social media guy, but I think Coach Harbaugh does such a good job because he's always been in situations where he's been hated on and disrespected by the media or something like that. Like I forgot what he said, but two weeks ago, the people hate me or complain about me for 19 things, but one person says one good thing about me, that's a win.

I feel like it just pays tribute to him. He has such a great career in the NFL. He's won everywhere where he's been. So it's really a cool thing. It definitely trickles down to the players. It's special.

Q. Do you think he relishes in that criticism and the hate and everything else?

TREVOR KEEGAN: I think he does because with all the hate he's getting on our team, like he'll come in with a smile the next day, like if he'll get suspended, like he'll crack one of his Coach Harbaugh jokes, like how is this dude okay right now? Like he just got suspended three games. He'll like come in smiling, cracking one of his jokes.

It is really just who he is as a person, so strong, blue collar. That's definitely fallen down on the rest of our team.

Q. You guys get to see a version of him we don't, and I've covered ball for a long time, on the outside because he's just an odd guy. Is he inside the building as odd as he seems on the outside?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Yeah, so it's kind of cool. I've been here since 2019, and for Coach Harbaugh, I haven't even seen him grow as a person, which is kind of cool. Myself, being a young kid, coming in here and seeing myself grow as well, but just to see him change as well.

I remember him always being like the videos of him screaming on the sideline, like stern Coach Harbaugh, but seeing him, building a relationship with him over the past couple of years, with our team and really getting to know him. I could see how like the media could portray him as just like an oddball.

When you talk to him in person, like his stories and his little jokes, and he's got the best analogies you'd ever hear in your life. Like he could come up with an analogy on the spot, and some of them are just dead hilarious. Like the players and I, when we win, like we look forward to those Monday team meetings because they're just -- he's high energy, analogies spitting left and right. It's really cool.

Q. Do you have a favorite analogy?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Dude, I've heard probably a thousand since I've been here. You're going to have to ask Colson or one of the other guys. I'm drawing a blank right now. There's some funny ones. There's no doubt about that.

Q. You don't think he's a little bit of an oddball.

TREVOR KEEGAN: I love it. I think I'm a little bit of an oddball too, so it kind of matches. I think a lot of our players, there's a lot of personalities on our team. We like to show it. I think he loves it too.

I remember at the Michigan State game, usually the bus is silent and only the players are chatting and stuff like that. Obviously we beat Sparty 49-0, so the energy was a little high on the bus. We had an hour bus ride coming from East Lansing. It was a little quiet. All the guys were like, man, why is it so quiet here? We're like, we just won 49-0.

So we ran up there, and the bus had a microphone. So we started singing a bunch of songs, like -- what's that one song by Chris Stapleton or something? I'm sorry. It's a good one. It's a good singalong. It's a good one.

Q. Tennessee Whiskey?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Yeah, like Tennessee Whiskey, Bon Jovi, Living on a Prayer. Coach Harbaugh, coach is like, this is my favorite song of all time. We're like, oh, this is going to be a banger. He grabs an mic, and he's singing a song just off the phone, and everybody is like what? What song is this? And he sang the whole song for like five minutes. And everybody is like what song is this?

But we were just hyping him up, and he loved it.

Q. Do you know what song it was?

TREVOR KEEGAN: I have no idea.

TREVOR KEEGAN: I have no idea how it went, nothing.

Q. He was a good singer?

TREVOR KEEGAN: It came from his heart. Nobody had any idea. What song is that? We were trying to -- what's the one? Shazam. Shazam, wasn't even reading it. It was a cool moment. When you're away in college football, there's always moments that are going to bring the team together more, and it's really cool.

Q. Was one of those moments when Zak went down in

the Ohio State game?

TREVOR KEEGAN: Most definitely. Yeah, just seeing -- he's my best friend and just seeing him go down. My face, his shin was right here, and my face was right here. I can't get that sound out of my head.

I just remember sprinting downfield and thinking, oh, don't be true. I turned around and saw him down, and my heart just sank to my stomach. Seeing his family come out there, for me, I'm not an emotional guy, but seeing a guy who you've worked your tail off with and seeing him even change the Michigan program and all the hard work he's done.

And Blake scoring on the next play and our team -- not just our team, but the 111,000 people inside Michigan stadium, that was the loudest I've ever heard Michigan stadium. Zak kind of makes it funny, like, yeah, it just had to take me to snap my leg to scream, Let's go, Zak in the Big House.

But that was the loudest I've heard Michigan Stadium, and it just really felt like our fans just rallied around the players and picked us up because we were down. He's our leader. I'm with him every single day for the past four years. Just seeing the fans pick us up and the rest of the players and Blake scoring a touchdown right behind my butt.

Then Quinten Johnson laying the dude out and then route calling the game, it was a really special moment. For Zak, that was the best worst case scenario possible. He's damn near walking already, which was really cool. We were at the Lakers game last night, and I recorded him going up the stairs. He's slowing everybody up. He's like trying to move fast. He looks up and starts smiling.

It's funny, though. He's in good spirits, and the team's done a good job keeping his spirits up. Especially getting all the accolades he's getting. That's going to definitely help mentally too. It's been really cool.

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