

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Friday, December 29, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines Michigan Wolverines Roman Wilson

Press Conference

Q. What was that song that Coach Harbaugh was singing? You were saying you had no idea --

ROMAN WILSON: The one song, "It's Going to Be a Good Night," one? I don't know.

Q. "I Got a Feeling," by Black-Eyed Peas.

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know. I don't know.

Q. Was it "Lucky?"

Q. Maybe '60s --

Q. So nobody knew it was a song?

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know what he is talking about.

Q. He was sort of following up on how all of us on the outside look at coaches as a little bit of an oddball. We sort of do. From y'all's perspective as players, what is that like?

ROMAN WILSON: He's like a kid for real. He be cracking jokes like trying to get us with Deez Nuts jokes. He is out there having a good time. He really is a player, like one of us deep down.

I told them out there, I went to his house for Christmas, and I thought he would just be inside chilling on the couch. He was just outside working on the chicken coop, chickens following him around. His actual kids were following him, and then chickens were just following him, and he was working on the chicken coop. I was, like, man, this is the most Coach Harbaugh thing I've ever seen.

Q. Has he changed some?



ROMAN WILSON: He definitely has. I can't really speak on it too much, but I feel like maybe he's getting more comfortable with his players, like really building that personal connection with us. I don't know if that was something we were missing when I was younger. I don't know if I was a younger guy and didn't see it. Being an older guy, I feel that one-on-one connection with him.

Q. You guys have talked about being kind of galvanized by everything that's happened. The more you hear -- even if you hear Alabama players talking about they're careful with their iPads because of the sign-stealing, how does that make you guys feel, and does that still inspire you?

ROMAN WILSON: You know, when I saw that, I wasn't really shocked. I feel like every team we play, somebody is going to say something about it.

For us we just kind of sit back and laugh at it. We always are having a good time. It just kind of gives us a chip on our shoulder that we have to go out there and prove people wrong consistently because they think this is some big thing that we did that really affected it, but at the end of the day you still have to go out there and play football.

Q. Did you guys see that on social media yesterday? How did you see those quotes, I guess?

ROMAN WILSON: Probably just social media.

Q. Do you think the sign-stealing scandal has given guys a reputation, and does that reputation frustrate you?

ROMAN WILSON: When you are inside the building, no one thinks about it or talks about it. You see on Twitter it's the biggest thing I've ever seen. I feel like people definitely blow it out of proportion. It's pretty outrageous.

Q. Trevor was saying he thinks Coach relishes being the villain or bad guy.

ROMAN WILSON: Yeah. Deep down he definitely kind of likes being the bad guy for sure, but I don't know what he



said. What a good 'bad guy.' That's what it was. Trying to think of a movie character or villain who is really just a good guy deep down. If you guys got an idea, that would be great for us because he likes being that villain, but he is a good guy at the end of the day. You know what I mean?

Q. Did he reference somebody in particular?

ROMAN WILSON: He was trying to. He couldn't think of one (laughing).

Q. Is it frustrating that you have to play the bad guy role, but then you still took precautions as a team to guard your own --

ROMAN WILSON: I wouldn't say it's frustrating. I'm a good guy. I grew up in Hawaii. I got that Aloha spirit, and I'm very polite to people. Then you say one bad thing in the media, and everybody is, like, this guy is an asshole. This is the most -- this is the rudest person I've met in my life.

It's not frustrating, but it's like come on, bro. You don't know these players or coaches. You know who they are. You seen them mix it up with all these emotions on the field and after the game, before the game. You kind of base your opinion off that.

It's a little annoying. At the end of the day it doesn't really matter. It doesn't affect me.

Q. What did you think of Tua throwing it up to the line?

ROMAN WILSON: When I was a freshman, he was a senior. He was always a great kid. He was always a phenomenal arm talent. Just out there slinging that thing.

I do have a funny story. When I went to that school, I was very uncomfortable at first because I had just moved there. Different island, everything. I was walking up the stairs one day. I wonder if he remembers this. I was walking up the stairs one day out in front of the school, and he was on the third floor looking down, and I had food in my hand. I slipped and fell and spilled my food everywhere. I looked around to see if anybody saw me. It was just him. I thought, you've got to be kidding me. The only guy that saw this was him, and he was just laughing at me. It was bad.

Q. You ever picked him off?

ROMAN WILSON: Tua?

Q. Catch passes from him?

ROMAN WILSON: Probably warming up, but not in a game. Not in a meaningful practice. I wish I did. That would have been cool.

Q. Now that J.J. says he is as healthy as ever, do you think he is anxious to show what he can do in the running game, which is kind of put on hold a little bit the last few weeks?

ROMAN WILSON: Yeah, for on sure. I feel like he is always anxious and always -- I don't know why I feel like sometimes he feels like he has to prove everybody wrong. Everybody knows he is a great quarterback. He is phenomenal arm talent and phenomenal running skills. I always feel like he is trying to prove everybody wrong and show that he is one of the best quarterbacks out there.

Some of the things you see in practice and some of the intensity he comes with, it's just like crazy that a guy like that who could already feel like he's on top of the world fields like he needs to prove more people wrong.

Q. Is that even more important thinking this team -- because Bama has had problems with the quarterbacks who can move and are mobile. That's sort of been kind of the kryptonite. Is that more important? Does it make things happen like that?

ROMAN WILSON: It's always important, man. A lot of my touchdowns this year are coming from him running out of the pocket and just extending plays. That's always an important thing to have in a quarterback, a guy who can extend plays and keep his eyes down field. I feel like you never know if it's going to be important for this game, but if he has an opportunity, I bet he's going to make a big play when it happens. You know what I mean?

Q. There's all these graphics kind of comparing him to Jalen Milroe. Do you feel like he thinks -- he says he doesn't look at those, but do you see that as a team and want to have his back, I guess?

ROMAN WILSON: I never have seen a graphic like that, but I look at J.J., and I think he is one of the best quarterbacks, if not the best quarterback in college football. I think he is very good, and all-around he's the best teammate, the best guy to have on your team.

I really do believe that he really cares about us. He really gives back to the community. He's really watching film and hitting us up and telling us things we've got to do and how to be locked in. I just love being around that guy and having him on the team.

I feel like sometimes you miss that with other people, and they're just more focused on winning things for themselves instead of trying to win the national championship for their team.

Q. This team's approach this week for this approach, is it different this year than last year going into TCU?

ROMAN WILSON: For me I feel like it's a little bit different. I definitely up the film count. Definitely watch more film. I definitely try to focus on the small things in my routes. I definitely just study more and try to give it my all because I know what it's like to go all the way and then you're expecting another game after this one, but there is no game. I know what that feeling is like to reach the end and not accomplish your goal.

Q. You talked about Caleb being a hard hitter. Who is the hardest hitter you have gone against this season?

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know. It's a hard win. I don't know. I didn't get boomed too much this season. I took a hard hit in the Maryland game, but I wouldn't say we had a really hard hitter this year.

Q. Did you do anything to get ready for it then if you are facing a hard-hitting defense?

ROMAN WILSON: You just give it all you got. When you get that adrenaline right before the play, just go run up on it. That's all you have to do. You just have to be willing to go do something.

A guy like that who is going to bring his shit, you have to have that mindset too.

Q. Try to hit him first maybe?

ROMAN WILSON: Yeah. Just meet him there. Point of contact. You just have to make sure you're there with him. Coach says just bring your shit.

Q. To win this game, what's the one critical thing Michigan needs to do?

ROMAN WILSON: Just details, execute. These games are going to come down to us, and the biggest thing that's wrong with this team is when we lose games, we don't play good. It's because we're hurting ourselves. We're not locked in. We're not executing. We're not going over things we talked about and executing the ways that we practiced earlier in the week.

Q. So being from Hawaii, maybe having a different perspective on things, what do you think of the Big

Ten/SEC rivalry?

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know. Growing up I didn't really watch a lot of college football. I wasn't the biggest guy out there. My background isn't that crazy. I didn't even really know there was a Big Ten/SEC rivalry. People like to talk shit and say that one is better than the other, but I feel like that's always going to happen.

I feel like sometimes we've been compared to the PAC-12 and things like that. I don't know. Maybe. I think it's really going to explode over these next couple of years when you kind of have that really super power Big Ten and the SEC growing too.

I just can't wait to see what my future looks like watching college football and every single good team you look at, the best team is all in one conference. You know what I mean?

Q. Yeah. Did you get recruited by an SEC school?

ROMAN WILSON: I had a couple. I can't think. The one that sticks out to me is probably Tennessee, but I didn't have the Alabama or something like that.

Q. Seemingly every year when the Big Ten plays the SEC in a big-stage game, the speed comes up. When you watch these guys on tape, do you see any difference at all in team speed across the board?

ROMAN WILSON: Team speed? I think their defense shows up to the ball well. I feel like all 11 guys get to the ball well and give a lot of effort. Being a fast guy, it's kind of like -- it doesn't really surprise me when you see other fast people anymore.

Q. How it compares to you guys, do you think they're appreciably faster across the board than you guys?

ROMAN WILSON: No, I don't think so. I feel like they're all good athletes, but I don't look at them and be, like, holy shit, these guys are too fast. I think they're all good, but I think nothing we haven't seen before.

Q. What stands out about their two corners?

ROMAN WILSON: Just great technique and everything you watch about them, even when a guy does make a play, they're still there. They're right there at the line of scrimmage. They're very good at the line of scrimmage. They play the top of the routes really well. They break on the ball really well. They stay on top of receivers good too. They're both going to be NFL dudes one day.

It's a great opportunity for me to go out and play against them. What I found out about the game back after the championship game, I was excited. There are some dudes. It's a great opportunity for me. I couldn't be more excited.

Q. Coach Harbaugh has been outspoken a couple of minutes when he has been in front of cameras this year that revenue needs to be shared with the players. How much of that maybe whether it's in private moments or as a group -- how often is that a topic of discussion?

ROMAN WILSON: I think he only brought it up one time. He doesn't really talk about that stuff around us. I feel like every time I've seen it it's been in the media or something like that. He only brought it up. He is just, like -- it was kind of crazy. It was before a game, and he is, like, man, I really -- some of you guys really deserve some money. I kind of want to spread that around with you guys. He seemed pretty serious about it.

I think it's a good thing. NIL and sharing money and that, if you do it in the right ways, I feel like it's very helpful to college students. A lot of young guys who come from really bad backgrounds, they could use the money. Their family could use the money, too.

We do a lot for the Big Ten, for our schools, and representing our states and things like that. It would be nice to be paid.

Q. As a player when you're -- especially coming from a place like Hawaii where maybe you're not exposed to what big-time college football can be, do you have any memory of it opening your eyes, like wow, whether at a stadium or the way you travel or just, hey, there's a lot of money here? It must come from somewhere.

ROMAN WILSON: Definitely when I start visiting schools, and you go to UCLA, Cal, and things like that, be they're very nice facilities too. You come to Michigan, and it's like holy shit, this is different. Just the building alone that we get to be in every day is millions upon millions of dollars.

One of the biggest weight rooms I've ever seen. The training room is outstanding, and even just flying planes. I don't know. That's not even a big deal, but just flying planes to games, that costs a lot of money too.

They take care of us. We got all this gear for the Rose Bowl. That's got to be easily \$500 per person, and they gave it to a lot of people. That money has to come from somewhere.

Q. When you say he brought it up before a game, pregame speech, or can you give context to that?

ROMAN WILSON: It was a meeting the night before a game. We were just talking. He just had one of those moments where he could see it come to his head, and he brought it up. It's the type of dude he is. If he has something to say, he is going to say it.

Q. Was there a reaction to that?

ROMAN WILSON: It wasn't like a funny joke. It was just a series -- like, yeah, I feel like some of you guys deserve some money. If you go out and ball out, good things are going to happen to you.

Q. Big-picture, how does all this end up? Is it logical to assume in X number of years guys are just going to be paid? You get a lot now.

ROMAN WILSON: Yeah. I get a good amount of money from NIL. I don't know how it's going to evolve. If I had an opinion or a thought, I feel like every team should have a fine set amount for each player so things don't get too out of hand. You kind of see that somewhere players drive some crazy as cars, living in nice skyline apartments, which is fine. Some guys -- you don't want a team where some guy has that and another guy has nothing. I feel like that's not right.

Q. Why?

ROMAN WILSON: I feel like that's not right. Even if you are a starting quarterback at the highest level or you're just a scout team like walk-on player, you're still part of this team. You're still a dude. You still help this team win in some way. I feel like everyone deserves something.

You've got to show up to all the 6:00 a.m. lifts. You have to come to all the meetings where you have to -- you are working out with me. We're doing the same things. I just feel like it would be fair.

Q. Is that the difference -- is that the reason why locker rooms don't fracture because in college you still have to be that guy --

ROMAN WILSON: Yeah.

Q. -- that shows up at 6:00 a.m. with everything.

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know. I never have been in the NFL, but this team, it definitely is a little different. We do spend way too much time together. I don't think even in the NFL when I go to bed, like, in the hotel, I'm still going to

go to my friend's room and see what they're doing.

I was still just downstairs with them. Not even just downstairs. I was with them all day. We had practice, and then we had a dinner. Things like that. I'm always going to be with them.

I feel like in the NFL -- I don't know for sure, but it's a little more of a business. You just are kind of at practice meetings and then go to your family. You don't really go hang out with your boys as much as much.

Q. Is my understanding Hail! Impact sets a baseline for everybody so that everybody is taken care of. Is that --

ROMAN WILSON: I don't know how our NIL program works. I've heard a lot of names like Hail! Impact and Victors and things like that. For me it's like --

ROMAN WILSON: Do guys get a monthly check that is kind of a baseline for everybody and then some guys make more than that?

ROMAN WILSON: I want to say, yeah. I feel like we have -- every couple of months we probably have some team thing going on that gets players paid. I wouldn't say it's a monthly thing that every guy gets a check, but I don't really know. NIL kind of has been up and down at Michigan, but it's treated me well, so...

Q. You think it could be better?

ROMAN WILSON: A little bit. I don't know. It's just like competing with other teams. In ten years you never know what some of these other teams are going to be able to do. It's going to be -- if was a recruit in ten years and you're offering me \$500,000, I can't really turn that down. You know what I mean? It's going to be hard to pull recruits when thing like that are going on. It's going to be rough.

Q. With when you say it's been up and down, what do you mean by that?

ROMAN WILSON: This hasn't just been a set thing going on. I don't know. It's just been not that it's been going down, but it could be a little better.

Q. When you talk to friends on other teams, do you hear like, oh, yeah, we're getting all this and at Michigan you're, like, we're definitely not getting that?

ROMAN WILSON: Just I feel like some teams they have -- some of my friends that play on other teams they have a set monthly that all the players get a check like that. Then

you mostly just see the things on social media that are probably not even true. They're a little outrageous. That's kind of what other people are seeing. That's kind of what throws them off too.

Q. (Off microphone)?

ROMAN WILSON: Me? I actually love Louis V. That's one of my favorite designer brands. I told them out there too, when I brought that up, I was just like in the moment type thing talking about it. I didn't -- the media definitely took it out of context and tried to run away with it like I'm Marvin Harris, a villain, or something like that. They think I'm this biggest hater.

It's kind of weird. I think fashion is cool, but when you make it the main thing and you over-do it, it definitely -- it's definitely a little weird to me.

Q. Speaking of the NFL, not assuming that you have made a decision, but when it comes time to make the decision whether you want to go to the draft or stay another year, what's that going to look like for you?

ROMAN WILSON: Probably a lot of emotions. It's definitely a little hard for me to think about it right now. I'm just so focused on this game.

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