

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Saturday, December 30, 2023
Pasadena, California, USA

Michigan Wolverines Coach Jim Harbaugh

Press Conference

Q. This is your third time in a semifinal. What have you learned from your first two and what's different this time?

JIM HARBAUGH: Just that your dreams can come true, your goals can come true. Our team was very definite on this is where they wanted to be. This was one of their goals, the goal. It's what we hoped for, what we worked for, and exactly where we want to be, and now we're just ready to have at it.

Q. What's different about this season for you? How would you sum up the season for Jim Harbaugh to this point?

JIM HARBAUGH: Just being on a ball team. This is a ball team. Make sure your favorite ball team you've ever been on, whether that was little league, high school, college, pro.

This is a real ball team, and I just love it. I love our staff, love our players, love leading my staff, and I couldn't have a better staff to lean on.

Players, great piece on Blake Corum today that Marty Smith and ESPN did. Just happy they people get to see the kind of guys that I get to coach.

JJ McCarthy, he was born for this. Can't wait to watch him compete. Every single guy, I could say the same about. It's a joy to coach this team.

Q. In June that guy that took over for you as head coach you mentioned would be a head coach some day. Through circumstances beyond some people's control, they coached those games. What did that say about them that they were slotted in there in those positions?

JIM HARBAUGH: It's like watching my son -- my son did coach one of those games, Jay Harbaugh, Mike Hart,



Jesse Minter. Sherrone Moore, coached four of those games. It's like watching your son, watching your brother -- it kind of felt like watching my brother's team Monday night, just that kind of joy to watch those guys, watch them lead that football team and watch our players respond, watch the team.

Just the choice of being galvanized and just giving it their very best. That's all we asked. Just give it your very best and that way you'll feel good about what you accomplished.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: So many things. In a lot of ways, it has been. It has been a spiritual journey. It's been a mission. It's daily, weekly, monthly. It's a year now. One year with this team that they've been on this mission.

It's been a happy mission. It's been a joy to watch guys make the choice to play as a team, to be unselfish, to play for each other, to give it their very best. As I said before, you know when you're on a real ball team, and that's what our team is.

Coach Schembechler has talked many times, when I was a kid heard it, heard it when I played at Michigan, the team, the team, the team. In so many ways this team is the team. Couldn't be prouder, couldn't be more excited than leading this team into battle in the Rose Bowl.

Q. What would it mean for you personally (indiscernible)?

JIM HARBAUGH: What it means is that your players know what it's like to be a champion. That's the special feeling. Their parents know what it's like to have a son or a brother or a grandson who's a champion.

For me, for my wife to have a husband who's a champion, for my parents to have their son to be a champion, for my kids to know what it's like to have their father be a champion -- it's not for me anymore. It's for all them and all that we're associated with, and they know what that feeling is like, and now they want to go do it again.



That's the feeling.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: I just have had many of those moments, many of those successes. I just get more joy seeing their faces, seeing their families' faces, just how happy it makes them.

When you're a parent, that's what it comes from really. When you're a parent, you're just hoping, you're praying, you're supporting that your child is going to find something they're passionate about.

Once you see them find something they're passionate about, see them work through that, work to -- and then to watch them become the very best, it just does not get any better than that.

Q. (Indiscernible) ...how much has that changed from your standpoint?

JIM HARBAUGH: We have a one-track mind. 48 hours away from the Rose Bowl, that's everything. That's our complete focus.

Q. How would you describe the support you've had this year, given everything that's happened?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, the support has been incredible. Our parents' support, the players' support, the galvanized team, the support from the staff, their families, their wives, their kids, our fan base, people walking down the street in Ann Arbor.

It's been a joy, everybody pulling in the same direction of supporting.

Q. I know you were asked about it before, but Jalen Milroe, the Alabama quarterback, your thoughts on him?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I think he's incredible. He is their best thrower, he's the best runner. It's going to take all 11 on defense to stop him in particular.

It's a great team of receivers, offensive line -- this is the best offensive line that we've played. I think they average about 350 across the board. It's a very talented group. We're going to have to deal with them, they're going to have to deal with us, and I think it's going to be one heck of a match-up.

Q. When was the moment or when did you feel that

this year (indiscernible)?

JIM HARBAUGH: I can't think of the exact moment. It's just been better. It's like better today than it was yesterday, better tomorrow than today. It's that kind of team, and they're genuine and they're down to earth. Unselfish, play for each other.

When it all comes together, you just know it when you see it.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, the captains have been tremendous, the entire senior class, our fifth-year guys. Every single guy on the roster has been great. The grad transfers, guys that transferred in have made a huge impact.

It's an incredible ball team.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't know the exact percentage, but...

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: I think it's every man. It's every guy. Every guy in the kicking game, every guy in the kick return game, every guy offensively, defensively. Alabama has got a strong defense. We have a really strong defense. We have an offense that's explosive and able to -- with time of possession is capable of being really good, keeping the ball away from them.

There's so many factors to it. Turnovers are going to, once again, be huge. There's a lot of factors in this game.

We feel like we've used about every hour, every minute, every day in preparation, and our guys are locked in, and everybody is ready to play.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: Choice. It's their choice to give it their very best. It's choice to play for each other. Choice to be unselfish. All those are choices. Just watch our team on a daily, weekly, monthly basis make the choice to do everything they could to help our ball team.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I think it's a great question. It really is. I have given it some thought, and I think that our program is in a place where our staff, our coaches, our

players, we do everything to support the other guy on our team. Anything and everything to support -- because we know what they're trying to do. We know they've got their dreams, their goals, and they want to be really good at football. That's their passion.

I think, predict, assume that when you're a player and everybody is doing everything in their power to support you, then you're going to do everything in your power to make the choice to help the team. I truly believe that.

Q. A lot is getting ready to change with the College Football Playoff. Do you like the direction things are headed?

JIM HARBAUGH: That's a topic for a sit-down conversation after the season. That's not one I'm able to get out into a soundbyte.

Q. What's been your reaction to the players not watching film on their iPads?

JIM HARBAUGH: I know somebody said that. There's been just rumors out there about the Cloud and Catapult system, and I think they're just taking precautions.

Q. How were you made aware of that?

JIM HARBAUGH: Rumor. People just started talking about that. We know very little about how that works.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: I think our university -- that doesn't have anything to do with it. Please know I'm not accusing anybody of anything. Just really don't know.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: No, I didn't know. I didn't know. Don't know. Don't know as I sit here.

Q. Your players have talked about how you enjoy embracing the "bad guy" role. How has that galvanized you?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, just the choices that our guys have made, coaches have made it just be about this game. A one-track mind. Wake up and do everything in your power to dominate that day. Go to bed at night, wake up the next day, see if you can't dominate that day.

That's really worked for us. That mindset of a one-track mind is in a lot of ways what has gotten us here.

Q. Have the circumstances helped that in a way?

JIM HARBAUGH: To create that one-track mind? That's a question of chick versus the egg. I don't know the answer to that one, either.

Q. (On players being paid).

JIM HARBAUGH: Again, I don't know, (indiscernible) accusations, and there will be a time and place to sit down and talk about all the nuances.

Right now it is -- it is a one-track mind of using every minute, every hour, every day to get ready to play in this game.

Q. How early on in the recruiting process did you (indiscernible) Davis and what stood out about him?

JIM HARBAUGH: Pretty early. Pretty early. He's a two-time Mr. Football in North Carolina. The thing that's -- we can talk a lot about what already happened, but the latest is being able to watch him on the field and get to coach him.

The thing that is sticking out is like one book -- you give him a coaching point -- like I've given him four now since he's been here, and he gets it immediately. It is the next rep -- he's doing it exactly how I just explained it.

Just the intelligence, the athleticism it takes to do that I've found is rare, that you have that -- you can understand something, and then athletically be able to just repeat -- just go do it, as opposed to many reps, much time on task.

He's got the ability to visualize what you're saying and then athletic enough to immediately replicate it. That's special. That's something I've noticed immediately.

But a great guy. I'm so excited to coach him.

Q. How important do you think it is for him to get these valuable reps?

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't know. I don't know how important that is. But yeah, just jumping in and just watching how he handles himself, it's kind of an important tool for me to see because you can tell -- it's like watching JJ, when JJ took the field for the first time.

Just the presence that he has and had, and to watch Jaden do that, very interesting. How is he going to approach the first day. There it is. There's the presence. There's the genuine confidence. There's the work ethic. There's the humility. It's great to see.

Q. What were the coaching points you gave him?

JIM HARBAUGH: His eyes on the target. When he throws a deep ball, quarterback has a tendency to lift their eyes up and watch the ball instead of keeping their eyes on the defender and the receiver the entire time.

Coached him on the snap. Like a lot of guys they don't take a snap in high school, so getting that coached up.

There was a ball handling coaching point that I made, how to get away from center faster that he just immediately, immediately replicated.

One other I threw in a corner route that -- he just can pick it up. When I say, listen, there's a real art to that, like to listen, to really hear what the instruction is, and then be able to embrace the instruction and then to go execute the instruction.

But hear it, really hear it, embrace it wholeheartedly, and then go execute it to the best of your God-given ability. He's got that talent to do all three.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: He's seen a lot of balls kicked off. Just knowing. Just knows -- seen it all, done it all, been a head coach. A go-to guy for me that he sees something -- how do you see that, Rick? He usually just comes back spot on.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, nothing but respect. The consistency, the consistently great would jump to mind, and know it is going to be a tough competition.

Q. (Indiscernible).

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, there is. Right where we wanted to be, competing against a team like that. We're going to have to deal with them and they're going to have to deal with us. I think it's going to be one heck of a match-up.

Q. (Indiscernible) can you take anything from those games?

JIM HARBAUGH: I remember breaking my arm, getting my arm broke.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

JIM HARBAUGH: They've been good. They do a great

job. There's a number of guys. When you talk to them, their experience was good, too. They had one of those really good experiences. That's how I'd frame it.

Q. (Indiscernible) why is he such a key figure for you?

JIM HARBAUGH: He's wise. I have a feeling that if Jesus were to come back now in this era, I suppose that many of the biblical analogies he'd use would be about sports as well as agriculture, maybe a combination of the two.

Solomon would have been a great coach, too. I have that feeling. Jesus would have been a five-star. He would have been a five-star player, no doubt about it. He would have been a Hall of Fame coach.

Q. What's been the number one reason for your guys (indiscernible)?

JIM HARBAUGH: I really don't have to preach. So much of it is self-motivated. There's so many -- they've thought about this, planned for this, worked for this, and yeah, getting locked, cocked and ready to rock, they are locked in and ready to roll.

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