

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Saturday, December 30, 2023  
Pasadena, California, USA

## Alabama Crimson Tide JC Latham

### Press Conference

#### Q. How are you feeling so far today?

JC LATHAM: I feel pretty good. Feel pretty good. Excited to be here. Excited to get going.

#### Q. What's been the most fun you've had outside of football since you've been here?

JC LATHAM: Since I've been here? Really just kicking it with my guys. I've been in Cali once and I loved it, so really just to be able to enjoy the experience leading up to the game with the guys that we worked so hard with. Blessed (indiscernible) throughout the whole year and our perseverance through the adversity, and just being able to get the work done and relaxing with them, kicking it with them is best part.

#### Q. It's like an opportunity to exhale, right? Take a deep breath and exhale and enjoy the moment and take it all in the sights and festivities. How did you enjoy the Beef Bowl?

JC LATHAM: I loved it. I loved it. It was an amazing experience.

#### Q. How did you have your meat cut?

JC LATHAM: I had mine medium rare.

#### Q. How many did you have?

JC LATHAM: Just one.

#### Q. What is your inspiration in life? What makes you a great player that you've become?

JC LATHAM: My two younger sisters and younger brother and my mother. Growing up it was my three brothers and two sisters under one house -- under one roof, with my mom, grandma, auntie and great grandma in a



two-bedroom apartment.

I struggled seeing that and then eventually I moved in with my dad when I moved to Wisconsin. Still from time to time I was going back to my mom, and eventually it was unfortunate to have to live in a hotel along with everyone.

So that kind of experience just really opened my eyes about how deep the game means to me. And everything I can do to kind of just excel her life and put her in a situation where she's financially stable.

I mean, just understanding and seeing -- the moment that really stood out to me was my two younger sisters, when they were (indiscernible) at a time when they -- all we had was nuts and sugar, and we made sugar nuts out of it.

So with that experience, every time I step on the field I just think about that time that stood out to me. And I know I can have a chance to change their lives. That's what motivates me.

#### Q. What's the key to victory come Rose Bowl day?

JC LATHAM: Being persistent. It's going to be a heavyweight fight. And we're going to do some things, (inaudible). It's going to be about the last man standing.

#### Q. What has it been like to be at the Rose Bowl?

JC LATHAM: It's been amazing, just knowing that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Not too many teams get here. Just understand that we're one of the blessed teams to make it this far. And we're not done. It's been an amazing experience thus far.

#### Q. One of the things we've been impressed is the growth and development of this offense (indiscernible) and Milroe. How have you seen it up close?

JC LATHAM: Just telling everybody from the jump, I've always known he could be a high-end player, seeing him since I got here as a freshman. First thing he did when he stepped on campus was go work out.



So knowing he's always going to do what he has to do to put the team first. And then he got the opportunity to play last year in the Arkansas game (inaudible). Arkansas game (inaudible) game, could have done better and he tells everybody that.

And understands that he always holds himself to it and holds himself accountable. I knew he was going to be great. So when his time came to play, time came to shine he was persistent and he was a leader and vocal. And he always did what he needed to do to get the job done. And I just respect him the most for just how he battled through everything he's been going through.

**Q. (Inaudible) both sides, how are you going to prepare what you'll get out of Michigan?**

JC LATHAM: Just understanding every time (indiscernible) is going to be a physical, heavyweight fight, and they'll do some things that are going to be good for them and we'll do things that are good for us. And understanding that we have to do (inaudible).

**Q. Not being part of this last year and coming here, being in the playoff, getting that spot that obviously -- what do you feel, gratefulness or excitement to be here?**

JC LATHAM: Definitely grateful. But I knew (inaudible). We fought tooth and nail for everything. I take into account that we put in so much work and so many hours for this, and being persistent and a lot of people thought we weren't going to make it this far after the loss to Texas in week two. So after that situation, we understand that what we have to do is keep getting better.

**Q. There's a few IMG Academy guys (inaudible) J.J. McCarthy, (indiscernible). Do you have relationships still with some of those guys?**

JC LATHAM: I haven't had a chance to meet Keon he wasn't there when I was there. But I talk to J.J. from time to time. And I talk to Greg Crippen, of course. That was the guy who really moved to (indiscernible) offensive line when I was at IMG. Some guys I actually talk to. Keon I haven't had a chance to talk to.

**Q. Championship (inaudible)? What do you remember (indiscernible)?**

JC LATHAM: Just the spirit of the team, similar to this team, just being persistent. A lot of guys, the year before we won that championship. We weren't going to win. We were losing. When I got there we lost Evan Hill (phonetic). We lost Nolan Smith (phonetic), Trey Sanders (phonetic),

Noah Cain (phonetic). Everybody (indiscernible) was gone from my junior year. And (inaudible) senior year with J.J.

So we understand that we're all we got and we're all we need (inaudible). And that's what we had (inaudible) it's the same (indiscernible) with this team now.

**Q. He said you guys weren't supposed to play basketball, but that was one of his favorite memories. What are some of yours?**

JC LATHAM: Definitely the basketball games that we had, pick-up games we had at school. Just playing two-ball, 3-point contacts or slam dunk, whatever it may be, just pick-up games that's the funnest part.

Sometimes even guys now (inaudible) who are going to high school at the time, they joined in with us. Just fun to play with so many different people.

**Q. Who are some of the guys in NBA?**

JC LATHAM: Mark Williams. I can't really think of a lot of other guys. But Noah Farrakhan, just guys like that who were major talented players in the sport, we got to play with those guys. It was a fun experience.

**Q. Did you get one of Saban's butt-chewing for the iPad stuff the other day?**

JC LATHAM: He understood the situation of how we (indiscernible). He knew that probably going to do something asked about. It wasn't just a chewing, just an understanding how we can speak about it (inaudible).

**Q. You do take it as a learning experience?**

JC LATHAM: Yeah, everything is a learning experience.

**Q. 30 minutes before kickoff, what artist are you bumping or what song?**

JC LATHAM: YoungBoy, chopping business.

**Q. What's the one thing you would tell yourself or a high school player who wants to get to this level to cut off if you want to get to this level as far as distraction, personal experience?**

JC LATHAM: Really it might be hard but you might have to cut off the social life that you want to have. Not saying cut it off entirely, but understand that you're going to have to have a lot of sacrifice to get to this level.

There's only 24 hours in a day. You need eight hours to

get a good amount of sleep. So you're only left with 16 after that. And I mean you can't be out all day partying or hanging out with friends all day. Not saying that you shouldn't, but at some point you're going to have to lock in and hone in on your skills and development on how to get better.

There's a lot of different areas you can get better in, whether it's the weight room, mentally, stretching your body out, recovery or physically on the field.

So obviously in order to get to that stage, you're going to have to have a certain amount of sacrifice. And it might come with your social life and your friends. But in order to get there, a lot of guys who are here right now understand that. I mean that's one thing that I would suggest.

**Q. How important is a support system?**

JC LATHAM: Oh, it's major. I wouldn't be nowhere without my close family and friends that have got me to this point. There's going to be a lot of growing up and maturing that you'll have to do.

People are going to doubt you no matter how good you are. (Indiscernible) got doubted. He still gets better to this day. Jalen got doubted (indiscernible). And we as a team got doubted. And that's how the game goes. You're going to get doubted no matter what you do.

I think LeBron James is probably the greatest player of all time, and even he gets doubted to this day as one of the greatest players.

And just understanding that you'll have to mentally be prepared for a lot of adversity, just be persistent.

**Q. I was talking to Greg Crippen and J.J. McCarthy and Tyler (indiscernible) and they were talking about that year at IMG you spent together. Does it almost feel like a full-circle moment to be with Tyler and playing with Greg and J.J.?**

JC LATHAM: I remember talking to Greg Crippen and I told him, I went -- first off, when I was younger, our D linemen, obviously Michigan (indiscernible) D line but (indiscernible) Michigan (indiscernible).

But obviously I went to a couple visits to Michigan. And one of the games I went to was the Michigan-Ohio State game. And most people really only get the whole (inaudible) or look at the end result. But as a football you look -- I remember when they played Justin fields, they missed a field goal (indiscernible) touchdown, so it was 7-6 instead of 7-7. That point obviously does matter in a

critical game.

You go later on down the line, (indiscernible) fourth and five, Michigan has the chance to get the ball back and potentially score. And it was (inaudible). And Michigan gets offsides and gets a first down. Justin Fields ends up running for about a 40-yard touchdown after that.

I told them, you guys aren't losing because of a lack of talent or anything of that nature, it's just lack of discipline. I said, eventually, I hope to see you guys on down the line, when I committed to Alabama, I expect to see you down the line.

I know J.J. and Greg as a player, very disciplined, oriented within their goals playing as a group. So I knew that he would get the team and rally the team together and it would be only a matter of time.

I wouldn't be shocked to see you guys in the playoffs or the national championship, and I thought it would be our freshman year, they played Georgia, and we played Cincinnati, but it's still crazy. We talk about stuff like that.

**Q. J.J. talked about the offensive line back in high school as kind of an embarrassment of riches. What was it like playing for a quarterback like J.J. McCarthy? What was that relationship like?**

JC LATHAM: It was amazing. He was from Chicago. We were in Florida. A lot of guys kind of didn't respect him at first, oh, he is a Chicago boy, came from the suburbs.

Just seeing him fight for his respect, even though he's one of the best quarterbacks in the country, fight for his respect. Not only really demand it but just rally the team as well as a guy in that aspect. I really respect him a lot for that, just getting everybody together and understanding what we have to do to be great and getting the job done, doing something that IMG previous football teams weren't able to do, winning a national championship.

**Q. Tyler Booker told the story of one time he was carrying the ball and you were blocking it, and can you tell that story for me?**

JC LATHAM: So, all right, it's like fourth and three. It's funny because coach was like real cool coach, wanted to give me a path play and a run play. I'm not a selfish guy, I like to catch the ball, I run the ball too, but I didn't want to take the ball from them, give it to another dude, give it to Tyler Booker.

It's a play run we installed. We installed it in the summer. We were playing Tennessee, like fourth and three. And

actually the linebacker that I was supposed to block plays for Michigan now. So that's the funny little full-circle moment. I'm at fullback. Book's at running back.

I told him, I said, don't try to handle this. As soon as you see him, just run straight through him. So it's like kind of like a stretch play. So I said, okay, I'm going to run straight through him.

When we had the ball, guys coming across. I am going to rush right through him. And I lunge at him and he goes underneath me. I say there's no way he tackles Book for a loss. They couldn't even get the first down.

So on TV, you see the breakdown marker. It's right here. Book is like two yards in front of it. Almost to the 1-yard line. The ref said he was down before. He ended up not getting it. It made it much worse because I missed my block. Coach was on me, if you would have made the block, Book would have scored a touchdown.

You see it on film, the breakdown. But ref didn't give it to him. I got a lot of hate for missing that block. I'm trying to get that play back installed again.

**Q. Is the personal aspect of seeing guys again and again, like you see them here, kind of fun for you?**

JC LATHAM: It's a pretty cool experience growing up with guys, being 16, 17, 18, just seeing guys from high school and knowing you played them in college and potentially the NFL, really cool experience. That's what a lot of legends talk about when they see a lot of other legends, as well how they played each other back in the day. It's fun just living in the moment.

**Q. Over the summer, Coach Saban was talking about how you wanted to leave the cape (indiscernible) until the quarterback is ready. What kind of cape has Jalen turned into?**

JC LATHAM: I'm not going to lie. I love red capes. So I'm not going to say anything about the cape. But whatever cape is considered the best kind of cape, I think that's the guy that he is.

He have the ability to throw the ball at any angle, and he's not only -- you know, some quarterbacks like to run. I respect any quarterback who does run. But the quarterbacks who like to run, he's like that. But only thing that makes him more is that he's not going to slide.

When he leaves the pocket, he's looking at direct contact on you. It is not just a DB. He's going to stiff arm the linebacker to the ground. Ran over the linebacker before.

As far as just being able to play for a guy like that. And it's funny, being in practice, when a guy like (indiscernible) runs off the edge, taps it on one hand and target the sack, knowing you see the game Jalen runs straight through guys. I don't think stuff like that will bring him down. But, no, he's definitely a great player, quarterback like that. He really maximizes his opportunities.

**Q. Red matches color-wise too?**

JC LATHAM: It definitely does.

**Q. You got to play in a couple of these bowl games now. Do you have a favorite bowl game, and what's your experience been like here in Pasadena?**

JC LATHAM: I don't really have a favorite bowl. I think the national championship would be the favorite one against Ohio State. But my experience has been amazing.

We also are -- for everything that we've done this year, we overcame so much. So many obstacles. Really persistent, whether it was injury or practice or just in game, being behind, stuff like that, we all overcame. Just being able to celebrate with my guys, being able to just really enjoy the opportunity being here outside of the work, it's really awesome.

**Q. You have some experience traveling for bowl games now. What's an essential that you have to bring on a trip like this when you're here for a few days?**

JC LATHAM: Hygiene kit. You know, football is football. They always going to make sure you have everything for football. But you've got to have a toothbrush, Listerine, soap, deodorant, all that stuff. You would be surprised how many people forget it. You've got to have a hygiene kit. Some cologne, smell good. You'll be in California, or wherever, you're in Houston, gotta make sure you're smelling good and you're ready to play and stuff.

**Q. Think back to one moment when you guys definitely, the fourth, third and one, walk through what was going through your head when you were on the field for what felt like forever before that ball finally finds the corner of the end zone.**

JC LATHAM: The only situation similar to that was Texas game last year when we wrapped up the field goal to win the game.

In that situation, all I had to do was block and make sure my guy didn't block the kick. So in this situation, it will be different.

I'll be active while I'm blocking, do one-on-one. I told myself you've been here before; you've just got to make sure now you stay inside/out and give Jalen some time to go. If he takes off running (inaudible), but I can't control who was catching the ball. Maybe I can just give them time to deliver a strike. And that's what we did as a group. We came in the huddle and we told each other everybody get the job done.

**Q. Is there any fear or thinking, like, missed calls when the season is over?**

JC LATHAM: No, we were all on the same page. We knew (inaudible) what happened and so --

**Q. The other day you mentioned you prepared, tackles, DB. I've never heard that before. That was really interesting.**

JC LATHAM: Playing DB is probably one of the hardest positions on the field, right next to playing tackle. I know that quarterback and linebacker, you've got to read everything at once; but in my opinion, playing the DB and the tackle, you're in a one-on-one game.

And the only thing I would say playing tackle, obviously I might be a little biased, might be a little harder at DB -- but I know some DBs, one of the things, the makeup, scheme, you get beat off the line, you recover, make the separation back up.

And the offensive line, you (inaudible) sack. I know DB as well, you might get beat and the D line might get a sack. There's no held back, opposite sides. You get beat, you get beat.

But in the same regards, both of those positions are highly coveted positions and highly regarded positions as far as being able to guard somebody who at any point can go any direction on the field. You need to know how to control your leverage, inside/out. Really, we're just the bigger version of a DB. That's really what it is.

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