

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Michigan

Monday, January 1, 2024  
Pasadena, California, USA

## Michigan Wolverines Coach Jim Harbaugh JJ McCarthy Junior Colson

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan 27, Alabama 20

JIM HARBAUGH: Happy new year. Great way to start the new year off. Glorious. That was glorious. It was a tremendous football game. Congratulate Alabama on a terrific game and their great players and coaching staff and their fans. It was an epic game. Glorious is how I feel. That was a tremendous win.

**Q. Wanted to ask you, you talk a lot about getting to the apex, and you're as close as you've ever been on a collegiate level. I wonder what this moment means for you and what it would mean for you if you were to take that final step and win the National Championship?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah. It's what it means to these guys, to our players the most, to them, to be champions, for their parents to have their son be a champion, their brothers and sisters, their grandparents, for our coaches, for my kids to have a dad be a champion, my parents, just those people to get to feel what that's like.

That's kind of long gone for me. My joy, my ecstatic joy is for our players and our coaches and our fans and our families, that they get to experience that joy of being a champion.

**Q. You guys gained 41 yards of offense in the second half until that last drive when your backs were totally to the wall. What enabled you guys to have the drive you had, tie it up? And talk about what Blake did on the game-winning touchdown.**

JJ MCCARTHY: I would just say credit to a great defense. They played tremendous. They had a great game plan for us. It's just all about focusing on the next play, one play at



a time, and just staying in the present moment and worrying about the assignment that you have to go out and execute.

We weren't really getting things going, but that never bothered us because it is all in the past and we are focusing on staying in the present and controlling the future.

To answer your second question, everything that I see out of Blake on a day-to-day basis and everything that Blake is, when everyone is tired, when it's overtime, he's going to be the guy that shows out just like he does in sprints when we run them in the off-season.

It was nothing new for me. It was just amazing the world got to see it.

JIM HARBAUGH: I would just say that it's just the way this team depth is built and how connected they are as players and we are as a team. It's unanimous support for each and every guy.

It's almost been an unfair advantage, all the things that the team has gone through. We don't care anymore. Don't care what people say. Don't care about anything that comes up.

We just know we're going to overcome it because it's unanimous support from every single guy on the team.

Blake, the best. There's nobody we love more than Blake. Let's get Blake up here.

Yeah, and the guys up front, the front seven and the defense, the coverage on the back end, our offensive line, our tight ends, our running backs, just the physicality.

That was two teams that were really physical, really tough teams up front. I really felt this game was -- if ever a game was going to be won up front, it was going to be won with toughness and physicality, and our guys were just there in rhythm and got it done. Epic game. Epic game.

The stick-togetherness -- I guess what people don't know,



how could they know what the togetherness is like. There's just nothing that can separate these guys.

But Blake is the huge -- he's -- in so many ways JJ is the glue, Junior is the glue, Blake is the glue. I could name you 50 other guys that are the glue, but it is so tight.

**Q. JJ, you told me at Media Day that you've been staying up late preparing for these games. Did you prepare for a fourth quarter in overtime like this, and junior, how much did the defense manifest those stops to win this game?**

JJ McCARTHY: Yeah, you know, just having the month that we had to prepare, I just wanted to leave no stone unturned. Going back to 2017, 2018, 2019, all the way up until the present moment, just making sure that I was locked in on all cylinders in every situation, fourth quarter, overtime, 4th down, and that big completion to Blake.

Just everything about it was just making sure I was the most prepared guy on the field so I could go out there and help my teammates as best I can.

JUNIOR COLSON: First off, all glory to God but you just got to see the way our defense practices. It's all 11 on 1, never 1 on 11. That's the way we went out there and played, made those stops.

We're all playing with guys that we trust the guy next to us because we're brothers. Like Coach said, it's a big glue. We trust each other, and just got to go out there and make our plays.

JIM HARBAUGH: It also things that guys go through. They go through injuries. They go through tough training environments, practices, games. Those are the situations that I'm talking about.

Adversity, that's the adversity. They train so hard, like Junior said, they practice so hard, they play so hard. It's their individual mental toughness that gets them through, but it's also someone. It's also someone else, someone on the team, someone in their family, their teammate or teammates that's just right there by their side, right there that has their back.

And Ben Herbert, who's always there, right by their side. He is an absolute -- what adjective could you --

JJ McCARTHY: Trained assassin.

JIM HARBAUGH: That resonates. He's got their backs, and it's so much credit to Ben Herbert and his staff for putting us in those situations, putting us in those tough

training environment situations.

When it comes to these situations, I was calm that fourth quarter, that overtime. I just felt like there's nothing that we couldn't overcome inside of this stadium today.

**Q. Coach Harbaugh, that last play when Alabama had the ball, it looked like you guys went back and forth with time-outs. What did you see, and then when they finally snapped the ball, what did you see on defense?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, we just had everybody in there. It was everybody. We call it twister, and everybody there, everybody to the ball. Similar to Alabama, every time you get inside the 5-yard line, they're in zero every down.

Our favorite play, it'll be JJ's favorite play, got us in the end zone there when we really needed it.

Yeah, we were just -- we were just all out, selling out, and playing for that -- let Junior -- go ahead, Junior. Why don't you describe it.

JUNIOR COLSON: We were playing cover zero. Coach was telling us all the time like this is the moment we were built for. This is the moment we come out here to play for.

We knew exactly what was going to happen. When the moment gets tough, you go to your best player, and they went to their best player, and we were right there to stop it. We said it's 4th down, one last play, everybody strained, everybody strained to the ball.

JIM HARBAUGH: So much credit to Jesse Minter and Sherrone, Jay Harbaugh, all of our coaches.

**Q. You obviously represent the Big Ten when you go out there in a game like this, and this is the first time a Big Ten team has beaten an SEC team in the playoffs since the first year in 2014. What does that mean to you guys?**

JJ McCARTHY: It just means everything. Just think about how far we've come, all the hardships that we went through as a team and as a brotherhood. Just being able to do it on this stage. It's been 26 years since Michigan won in this building, and the second most appearance out of any college in the entire country playing in this game.

It's just amazing the way it happened, but ultimately it's everything that Coach said. We can't do it without the unity that we have, everything that we went through this entire year made us unbreakable, and in the biggest moments we were going to show up.

**Q. Coach Harbaugh, playing in the granddaddy of them all, the Rose Bowl, what does it mean to you?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Glorious. It was right where we wanted to be. It's everything that we worked for, everything that we prepared for, everything we hoped for, everything we trained and strained for.

The team was just not going to be denied. JJ said it when he walked off this same podium last year in the semifinal game. He said, we're going to be back. What he told me was not only are we going to be back, we're going to win. And there he did.

And in overtime against Alabama, I think the last quarterback to win in overtime against Alabama was none other than Tom Brady.

I've said it before, but right here, this is the greatest quarterback in University of Michigan -- college football history. Got a long way to go to get to get where Tom Brady eventually got to, which is the GOAT. He lapped the field when it comes to that.

But in a college career there's been nobody at Michigan better than JJ. I know we talk about it an amalgamation of quarterbacks. He is that guy.

My guy Junior Colson, man. Was it all worth it, all the training?

JUNIOR COLSON: Always.

JJ McCARTHY: It was all worth it.

**Q. JJ, the offensive line, when you had to have ball control, talk about that. What made it so special for you to be back there knowing the guys would give you time to make the plays you have to make to win the game?**

JJ McCARTHY: I mean, the offense doesn't go unless those big boys go. That's just been -- Coach Harbaugh mentioned it. This game was going to be won in the trenches, and I feel like they did a tremendous job taking out two great edge rushers, two great interior guys.

I've had people reach out to me like Brad Nessler. Great guy. Love him. He said, watch out for 15 and 41. They're coming for you.

I never really felt them all game just because of the tremendous job LaDarius did and Trente did and Keegs, Nug, Carson stepping up in a big time role. Everything about that unit just meshes so well together through the

adversity with Zach going down and just all the credit goes to them.

That's the heartbeat of our team. Blake would stand up here and say the same thing. Those big boys, we owe it all to them.

**Q. There's a lot of interest in your future; I wonder if you can tell me what the chances are that the championship game might be your last one at Michigan.**

JIM HARBAUGH: My future consists of a happy flight back to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Can't wait.

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