

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

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Oregon Ducks Dan Lanning Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining today's head coach teleconference for the College Football Playoff quarterfinal at the Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential. I'm Karen Linhart, the Rose Bowl Game marketing and media director.

The Tournament of Roses is thrilled to host the Oregon Ducks in this year's Rose Bowl Game. We'll be joined today by Oregon head coach Dan Lanning. Coach Lanning, I'd like to start by asking you to give a brief opening remark about playing in this year's Rose Bowl Game.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of this game. Being on this side of the country, this is a game you dream of the opportunity to coach in. This is one of these games, this is one of the ones that I haven't got to do yet. It's certainly a thrill for me.

Obviously a big fan of our program and influence in our program is Phil Knight, and Phil has always told me his No. 1 goal is can we get to the Rose Bowl. I'm extremely ecstatic that our team gets to be a part of such an historic game, the granddaddy of them all. This will be a fun one for us, and I know our players are looking forward to that moment to getting out there on that field.

Q. Can you talk about just the strength of the Big Ten with four teams in there, four top 10 seeds, obviously you guys as the No. 1. How impressed have you been with that league, and how strong has it been?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, it's a great league. That's part of the allure for us getting the opportunity to join this league. Obviously we've only enhanced the league, but it's got a storied tradition. It's one that we're really excited to be a part of. We've been in some tough battles this year because of the games that we've got to play, and I think this is a conference that's certainly very deserving of having as many teams as possible represented in the



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College Football Playoff. Glad that our conference is getting that opportunity.

Q. You always talk about going back to the doctor. I'm curious what this week is going to be like from a team perspective in making sure you're ready for a game in three weeks.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I mean, it gives us the opportunity to have a little bit of recovery time, but we're definitely still grading our film just like always, evaluating where we can improve. So there will be a lot of good-on-good opportunities early on for us in practice before we start really looking at future opponents, trying to figure out what things have hurt us this season and what we can attack.

We'll almost utilize the coming weeks kind of like a bye week from that standpoint of evaluating our strengths, kind of creating an awareness of where we're at, and then figuring out what our weaknesses are and where we can improve.

Q. Coach Lanning, for you, there's been a lot of storylines from various players in your program. Kenyon Sadiq is one of those players. Can you talk about what he means to this program, what he means to you and how special he is to this team as you guys prepare for the upcoming Rose Bowl?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, right before the game yesterday, I remember in stretch lines I went up to Kenyon and I said, I feel like this is about to be a coming-out party for you, and he said, no doubt. I think after that game everybody got to see the same things we get to see every day in practice from him. The improvement of him as a player and how he's continued to get better, but also the special talent that he has. He's part of a really good tight end room. He's got a great position coach in Drew Mehringer that gets him prepared every single week.

But I'm really proud of what Kenyon has been able to do for our team and how much he means to our team, but obviously made some big plays in that game for us last night.

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Q. Last week you talked about how you felt like this program -- they're not behind, they're not necessarily ahead of the curve, they're exactly where they need to be. Just in regards to when you look at the maturity level of particularly the offensive line, how much have they progressed in your time that you've been here, and how kind of symbiotic has it been and how has their communication and execution and preparation really filtered throughout the rest of the team?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, there's been a lot of moving parts on our O-line throughout the year based on injuries and other things that have occurred. I'm just really proud of that group's growth. They do an unbelievable job.

I think on almost any team, the offensive line is usually the tightest unit. They're really close. They rarely get any praise, and they certainly deserve a lot of praise, and our offensive line is no different. These guys work really hard to go out there and give their best effort and put the best product on the field that they possibly can, and they've done it with different people in the lineup, which I think is really impressive, and certainly kudos to them for the work that they've put in.

Q. Dan, do you feel after last night's game and with three weeks to prepare, do you feel that Penn State put a lot on tape because they had nearly 300 rushing yards last night, and does that give someone the ability to kind of game plan for you guys with as much time and with you guys not having the chance to get in-game action?

DAN LANNING: Well, I don't know how much the game action piece matters, but I think that they certainly put some things on tape that we should expect to see moving forward. That's part of what we get to attack the next few weeks here in the coming weeks of, hey, how can we defend that better, what can we do a better job of. I know that's what we'll be attacking for sure.

Q. I know you touched on this earlier in the selection show, but with more time to react to the draw as the 1 seed and being the only team in the quarters to have a potential rematch from the regular season, your thoughts on your draw and being in that position as the 1 seed?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, same thing, what an opportunity for us. I'm excited about getting the opportunity to compete in the Rose Bowl. I think that regardless, the end-all goal, you're going to get to play some unbelievable teams in that process. I'm excited that we get to go play against great competition. That's what playoff moments are about.

Q. Coach Lanning, along the lines of what Coach Saban asked you earlier this morning, other than focusing on your own team, how do you prepare to face two opponents over the next two weeks, and how much of an advantage is it to have the extra two weeks of preparation while your future opponent is focused on the first-round game?

DAN LANNING: I think the real advantage is giving your guys an opportunity to get some rest and recovery in a really long season. You talk about playing 13 games, that's a long season.

There's an advantage there for sure, and certainly an advantage getting an opportunity to know who you're going to play. You don't know which team, but it's a little bit more like NFL football where you get an opportunity to prepare for both, have a great plan for both, and then be in position to be able to execute that when you get to that point.

Q. Dan, tomorrow will be the one-year anniversary of Dillon committing to this program for this season. Going back a year and what this week will be for him potentially, what did you think at the time in terms of bringing him in and the position that you could be in at this time, and how y'all are obviously meeting that potential?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I didn't know we keep track of anniversary dates for commitments. But I'll say this: Obviously our vision somewhat played out. A lot of times you talk about a vision and what you hope things might become, and right now I'd say the proof is in the pudding with Dillon. He's done an unbelievable job leading our team this year. It's no longer a vision, it's a reality.

I think a lot of times your thoughts create your intentions and your intentions create a reality, and Dillon has done an unbelievable job of that.

Q. Coach, you probably didn't see it, but the Big 12 title game there was a targeting call. When you see targeting calls like that throughout the season, especially on quarterbacks, how do you and your staff kind of work through scenarios as far as how the quarterbacks need to protect themselves, calls, or just anything that can possibly be done? Obviously quarterbacks are going to get hit, DBs are going to have their strike zones. How do you work through that scenario, similar to when you were kind of working through the scenario, the Ohio State game, calls you made. How has your staff worked on that throughout the season?

DAN LANNING: Give me a little bit more context for your

question here. What scenario exactly, our quarterback goes down, the next quarterback up? What's the question?

Q. For example, the quarterback for Iowa State, he got hit. It looked like a clean hit from the Arizona DB. He hit him but it was right below his chin so they reviewed it and they said it was targeting. You're ejected. Obviously quarterbacks are going to get hit, but when that situation plays out, what do you tell your defense on how to necessarily work that strike zone, and for the quarterback, how do you help them work through some areas to where, hey, watch out for that big blind side hit, because obviously targeting, it's kind of a moving scale how they call it. How have you worked on scenarios to stay ahead of that?

DAN LANNING: Well, I mean, you kind of said it on both sides. You want to hit in the strike zone defensively, don't hit in the head or neck area, so we try to train hitting in the strike zone, and then offensively we make sure we teach our quarterback where his hot is at, and if there's somebody on block, he has to be aware of that.

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