

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 23, 2024  
Pasadena, California, USA

## Oregon Ducks Coach Dan Lanning Press Conference

DAN LANNING: We're extremely excited about obviously getting to play a great opponent in Ohio State. I think that's a great representation of what the Big Ten is capable of, having these two teams with the opportunity to face off in "The Granddaddy of Them All." We're super excited, our players, our staff, certainly myself, about getting this opportunity at the Rose Bowl.

**Q. When the bracket was announced and you're the No. 1 seed, only undefeated team, and you know you're facing potentially Ohio State in the quarterfinals, what goes through your minds? Just your thoughts on a rematch with a team that you've already beaten.**

DAN LANNING: Super excited, getting an opportunity to play great teams is what it's about. This part of the year, when you play great teams, that gives you some extra motivation to go work really hard and be prepared and be ready to be out there on the field. Ohio State is a great team. The path to the end is tough, which is exciting for our team and certainly for me.

**Q. Wondering, obviously any season is a long season, but this one could be especially so for you guys, and I believe since 1894 we haven't seen a 16-0 college football program in the FBS. Obviously I'm looking ahead there, but when you're going through this season, knowing how long a season can be for you, one, how difficult is it? And I guess battling that psychologically with your players, preparing them mentally for that and, of course, physically navigating this schedule?**

DAN LANNING: I think the real challenge in there has been for me to make sure that I'm keeping our players fresh and our team ready, but our guys are really up to the mental challenge. We've got a mature team.



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I've been really proud of the way they prepped all season. And they've kind of attacked every single day and put a lot of trust in our coaching staff and sports science strength staff that we'll have the right program for them.

I'm proud to say that several of our players are hitting some of their highest testing numbers. We have guys hitting PRs in the weight room. I think it's unique at this point in the season, but it speaks to how we've been able to adapt and adjust some of our performance stuff throughout the year to make sure that we continue to stay fresh.

**Q. More of a big picture question for you, maybe this makes sense, maybe it doesn't, but this is your third year as a head coach. When you are developing what type of style of coach you want to be, what your philosophies are going to be, essentially what you want to be known as as a head coach, could you walk me through what the process is like stylistically the type of person you want to be as a head coach when building a program for the first time?**

DAN LANNING: I want to be the guy that wins. And I hope I'm a guy that's known as not the same coach today as I was yesterday. I hope I continue to grow.

We always ask our players to improve, to get better. That's the same challenge that I have for myself. I hope I play to our team's strengths.

I hope that I make sure I let the players win it on the field and have success on the field. But I hope, again, that I'm not the same coach 10 years from now that I am today. If I continue to get better and our team continues to improve, then I think we'll have the best result possible on the field.

**Q. Coach Day remarked that both of these teams are far different than they were when you guys played in October. One player you didn't have that was Jordan Burch, one of your best defensive players, what does he bring to your defensive front, and what does his presence mean on this team this time around?**

DAN LANNING: Just his size and athleticism. God doesn't make a lot of people that look like Jordan Burch. When

people see him, they're surprised to hear he's really 300 pounds because he looks really good at his size, but he plays like a beast on the field, relentless effort, and the fact that we have great depth and several guys that can play edge positions for us, it allows us to make sure that when he's on the field he's fresh, and a fresh Jordan Burch is really dangerous.

**Q. How much clarity have you been able to get in the weeks since this junior college injunction and the impact that could have on Kobe, Jamari and George in the short term, and I suppose Sione in the long-term could go from being a redshirt junior to a redshirt freshman, theoretically?**

DAN LANNING: I haven't put a lot of focus on it right now. I think there's time for that. I don't know that it will be as easy as maybe people read into. But again that really hasn't been my focus right now. And I don't think it's really been those players' focus either.

We'll cross that bridge when we get there, if there's an ability to create that or not, we'll see.

**Q. Teams don't play each other in the same season very often in college football. I think you did with Washington last year. Is the attitude, philosophy, just stick with what worked before when you go into the second one?**

Is there a tendency to think you have to put wrinkles in there, overthink things, or is it just worked before, it will work again? How does that play out in coaching meetings?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we're going to do the exact same thing, right, every play, first call -- no, you look at what worked, what didn't work, look at how your team's changed and you try to play to your strengths and look at how your opponent's team changed. There's going to be differences in this game versus the last game, for sure.

**Q. What distinguishes Will Howard as a quarterback, and what have you seen since the time you played him in October?**

DAN LANNING: Well, I think he has good size, obviously, and he's a big body. He's hard to get down. More than that, I think he's built a lot of confidence in the guys he's able to throw the ball to, and even some confidence in the quarterback run game. I think you see him utilized a little bit more in the QB run game later in the season.

But he does a good job throwing good balls. He certainly threw a lot of good balls the other night down the field and

was able to target the wideouts for explosive plays down the field. Playing really good football right now. Certainly played really good football against Tennessee.

**Q. Obviously you guys have played a seam of four, but it's going to have been almost three months since the last time you have seen them, looking at Ohio State and what they've been able to do since then, how is Ohio State changing, how does that change your approach from how you approached it from the first match-up to how you're going to approach it now?**

DAN LANNING: I won't really get into the differences, but they're a really good team. I don't know if there's a more talented team in the nation. Obviously they've got great weapons outside at wideout and across the board. Tight end's a big target and running backs are elite. They've settled in with their offensive line. That's really shown up. And defensively they play we relentless effort. They have talent across the board at really every position. Schematically, they pitch a lot of different things to you on both sides of the ball that stress you. Their ability to play with tempo at times on offense and then slow it down, come out of a huddle.

The shifts in motions and all those things show up, and defensively they kind of keep their foot on the gas, whether it's a pressure mentality at times and then coverage mentality at times. Seems like they're in the right call a lot of the times. They do a good job on both sides of the ball with their coordinators and the players do a good job executing.

**Q. You talked about this team always improving every single week towards the end of the year, playing your best ball. How close do you feel you are to that target rate, and what's different from this year's team or this team this week from the first meeting of improvement?**

DAN LANNING: I think our best game just overall we've played is probably our Washington game, just in all three phases. I think we've gotten better at different things, with each group and each side of the ball throughout the season, but I think at moments we've certainly shown our ability to play really good football.

I think you could probably argue that Ohio State's best game was the game they just played. So it's important at this point in the year that you're playing really good football. Sometimes you don't know that until you step on the field. That's your job as a coach to get you ready for those moments, get our players ready for those moments, but certainly hope that we put our best foot forward when we play in this Rose Bowl.

**Q. Similar to some of the questions you've been asked about the sort of rematch, but when you're preparing for a game like this, do you look back much at that first game? Do you look more at what Ohio State's done since then and how you've changed things? What do you focus on as you prepare?**

DAN LANNING: Well, you've got the time to do it, so you look at all of it. You look at the history of the team. You look at the history of the coordinators. This kind of is unique where it gives you a little more time to evaluate big picture. Just coordinator philosophies. And then also the original match-up, what that looks like, and what they've done since. So I don't think you necessarily focus on one of those things. I think you focus on all of that.

**Q. Dillon in the first match-up was able to some make plays with his legs, especially on that touchdown there. Ohio State saw a similar quarterback with lamaleava at Tennessee and was able to limit his ability to shift the pocket and make plays with his legs. How important is it for Dillon to be mobile against this athletic Buckeye defense and the athletic front seven?**

DAN LANNING: I think it's important for Dillon to be able to take what's there. And at times that's going to be times he makes plays with his legs during coverage, and at times means he'll be able to throw the ball. But Dillon has proven throughout the year that he can do both.

**Q. This game came down to literally the last second the first time. How do you, with everything that's going on late game, keep track of timeouts, situations, everything that comes with a late close game?**

DAN LANNING: One, you hope that you have your timeouts there, you hope you're able to utilize them. We have a plan when we want to call that third timeout and when we call the second timeout and call the last timeout. So for us that's kind of something we do consistently throughout the season, throughout practice, creating those situations in practice and evaluating. There's been ideal time for us in each one of those situations when you utilize the timeouts and when to utilize the ability to get out of bounds or use the two-minute warning. We have it played out in our minds, scripted in our minds, so everybody is on the same page when we would like to use those.

**Q. You know as well as anyone how important that next-man-up mentality is. I'm curious how impressed you've been with what Ohio State has done on the offensive line this year after losing two of their key pieces up front.**

DAN LANNING: I think they've done a really good job.

Obviously they have good players, and they won several games last year with some of the guys in some of the positions they're playing now. So I think having the ability to shuffle and put guys where you need to be able to put them and create that continuity is really important and they've been able to create that.

**Q. I know you want to bring the best players into Oregon no matter how, whatever the mode, be it high school recruiting or transfers. But you saw how that's done at Georgia, but when they're not in your backyard, how does it change the strategy, when you don't have as many of those players within a 90-mile drive up campus, how does it change your strategy to get them?**

DAN LANNING: I don't know if the strategy necessarily changes, but it's more about identifying the right people that are comfortable with going where the best fit might be and not most convenient. That's something we consistently preach. When we're evaluating talent that can come here and help us, are you looking for the best opportunity, or are you looking for the easiest opportunity or most convenient opportunity?

In our program, we talk about sacrifice. Sometimes you sacrifice distance for the right place, the right fit, the right place you're going to develop, and we've had a lot of success doing that.

**Q. I guess in the past January 1st bowl games, including the Rose Bowl, sometimes teams have gotten there like a week ahead of time. It seems to maybe be changing a little bit in the expanded playoff era. Ohio State is not getting there until closer to the game. Does part of your travel schedule change? How different is this week going to be versus past times when you guys had a January 1st bowl game?**

DAN LANNING: It's a little different. We'll get there a little earlier than we would get there before a game because of the requirements of the bowl, but ultimately we'd like to get there as close as we can to a normal game week.

We'll probably be similar mindset to those guys as far as getting as many practices in as we can here on campus and then going there later in the week.

**Q. This team's been able to win a lot of different ways this season, whether it's shootouts or blowouts, dogfights. Can you just speak to how valuable that is as you guys enter this playoff?**

DAN LANNING: I think it's been really important for us, for our team, to realize that we can win in a lot of different

ways. And with that piece, knowing that if you're able to put all three phases together and play your best football, you can have a lot of success.

Football games come in a lot of different ways, and being able to be a team that can win it in multiple different ways is important for us.

**Q. Dillon Gabriel was on my Heisman ballot. But I wanted to ask you, when I watch him play what stood out most is his cool under pressure, et cetera. Does that set out to you too, and how would you express it as a head coach what he brings in the toughest situations?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think you've said it. I've been really impressed with Dillon's poise. It doesn't matter if there's just a couple of seconds left on the clock or if it's fourth and nine, I feel he treats those plays the same as first and ten at the beginning of the game. He's able to stay as cool as the backside of the pillow in big moments, and it's certainly paid off for us.

**Q. Obviously you guys won the first game, but it was a really close game that came down to the end. What are the biggest things you look at from that first game against Ohio State that you guys need to do better the second time around?**

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think big moments in big games like this always come down to critical situations. We have to continue to make sure we can execute on third down on both sides of the ball, have success in the red area, making sure we turn those into touchdowns when we're in those moments offensively and then eliminate touchdowns when we're in those moments defensively.

And then special teams play, I think, is always really big in these games. Like you said, that last game came down to the very final second. So not taking anything for granted and making sure that every single play counts and the next play is the most important is really important for us.

**Q. You guys are 4-0 in one-score games this year and three of those teams are still playing. What have you learned as a coach about coaching in one-score games coaching in games that are one-possession games, that come right down to the wire?**

DAN LANNING: I mean, a ton. It matters, right, the details matter in those moments. And very similar to what we were just talking about with Dillon. You've got to have poise and composure in those moments, be able to visualize what success looks like in those moments and hope that you've recreated those moments within practice

in situations throughout the season so you know you can go execute.

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