

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

Monday, December 23, 2024  
Pasadena, California, USA

## Ohio State Buckeyes

### Ryan Day

Press Conference



PLAYOFF  
QUARTERFINAL



RYAN DAY: Very, very excited. Our team's very, very excited about this opportunity to play in the Rose Bowl. The tradition of the Rose Bowl and the Big Ten obviously is well documented, and we understand that. So this will actually be my third time being at the Rose Bowl, and every time we go it's a great experience.

And certainly have a great opponent in Oregon, a lot of respect for them. Looking forward to the rematch, and looking forward to a great week of preparation.

I think when you think about some of the greatest venues there is in college football, certainly Pasadena and the Rose Bowl is right at the top of the list. So certainly excited to get out there and be part of this great tradition once more.

**Q. Chip Kelly said after the game that Will Howard has gotten to the point that he doesn't even have to finish the play calls when he's calling them into the helmet. Can you kind of address that, how important that is, how much of an advantage it is to have a quarterback who is that in tune with the playbook and can be that kind of guy, and just the way he's playing right now?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, our challenge to Will going into the last game was that he had to be the best leader on the field. I thought he was. I thought he played well, got into a rhythm early on. But I think for Will, understanding exactly how we're trying to attack defense is a critical part of being successful. And when the play caller and the quarterback are on the same page, like you said, the minute they hear the formation, they can finish it. That means he's got a great grasp of what we're trying to get done. So it will be important to put together another good game plan and executing it on the field. And I think that's what it comes down to, and Will, I know, is excited to have an opportunity to play Oregon again.

**Q. You mentioned after the game that you guys had introduced some gap schemes that helped with the run game, and wondering in what ways does that help with your offensive line and the ability to run the ball, with some of the gap stuff?**

RYAN DAY: We look at every game and try to figure out how we best can maximize our strengths, minimize our deficiencies, and we felt going into the game that that was the right thing to do. And we'll continue to look at that and see if that fits for this week, but I certainly thought we got good double teams on the inside guys, and I thought our pullers did a nice job of, on the defensive ends and the second pullers getting to the next level. And I thought our running backs ran through contact well and ran with velocity. So it all plays in.

And certainly when you have the weapons we have on the outside, it certainly changes how defenses have to play. And so the numbers can equate better. But we're always looking for a balance. And so I think we found that on Saturday, but now we've got to build on it. Nothing we did on Saturday has anything to do with what's going to go on on January 1st. So start from scratch again, identify the things that we feel give us an advantage, put those plays in, practice them, and then work like heck to make sure we can execute them against Oregon.

**Q. Wanted to ask you, with all the wide receivers that have come through Ohio State, what do you and Coach Hartline feel Jeremiah's most overlooked quality is?**

RYAN DAY: Probably his size. When you get up on him, you realize how big he is and how big he plays, and that will be something he'll have to do in this game as well, play big, play strong, play powerful. And I think Brian has done a great job again this year with our receivers, and we're going to need them all in this game, just like when we played them last time.

But certainly everybody's involved in the pass game, in terms of the protection, Will making the throws, but creating separation and making plays is what's important. And our receivers have done that, and certainly Jeremiah

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

has done that this year and we'll need that again on the 1st.

**Q. Certainly plenty of interesting subplots with Chip used to coach at Oregon, plus coming back to the Rose Bowl. What's it been like having him on staff with you this year and how have you seen him evolve as an offensive play caller with your team?**

RYAN DAY: I think that he's now a full season in. He's got an understanding of who we are personnel-wise. Now in the Big Ten, what that looked like, and so to your point, it has evolved with -- he's got a great understanding of the entire game of football, offensive football, whether it's wide open and spread and tempo or getting with multiple tight ends in the game, huddling, different styles of play, and he's always said, and we've always said that the number one job of the coordinator is to put the offense in the best position to be successful.

So that has to do with our personnel. It has to do with what we're seeing on defensive. And now I feel like we had a good balance this past game. So we'll look to do that as we put together a game plan for these guys.

**Q. With everything that you guys had to deal with after the Oregon game and the revenge or the rematch, or whatever you want to call it, how do you guys know that this is also for the playoff, balancing all of those different emotions that are going to come with this, seeing the Oregon guys on the sideline again after what happened in October, what's the balance like there with the messaging for you guys heading into this?**

RYAN DAY: It's about execution. It's about our preparation. It's about how we go about our meetings, how we go about our walk-throughs, how we go about our practices, so that when we get out to Pasadena we're executing at a high level. That's what it comes down to. Is it super exciting? I guess not, but it is what it is. But our guys have played this team before, so there's a reference point. I think both teams are in different places than they were when we played last time. I think we're different.

But still the players are the same and there's a lot to grab onto when you're watching film of somebody you've already played against. Sometimes when you're playing against a team maybe from another conference in the playoffs, there's a little bit of an unknown, how can you expect this guy to play? What am I really looking at when I look at the teams they're playing?

This team's not that way because we played them already and they played in the conference. So there's again a

reference point as we move into this one. So our guys know what they're up against, but they also know that they've evolved and we've evolved, and so two very different teams heading into this game. And the team who prepares the best is going to win.

**Q. You guys obviously had a lot of changes that you made on defense after that Oregon game. You've had a lot of success defensively since then, but this is the best passing offense that you've faced all year. How confident are you that those improvements that were made since then are real and will show through in this game?**

RYAN DAY: They do a great job on offense, throwing the ball, running the ball. They have a good balance. Gabriel is very, very talented and very accurate in what he does, and he's also very athletic. And they have weapons on the outside. So it's a challenge. We've seen that live and in color.

So we've made adjustments coming off that game, and we worked hard to make sure that we're putting our guys in the best position to be successful. We'll do that again against these guys this week and go compete our tails off.

But our defense is playing with great confidence right now. You can feel that on the field on Saturday. And they've continued that build after the game that we played with these guys the last time. You can see every week has gotten stronger and stronger. But we're going to go do it, put it on the field, but I know we've got a great challenge ahead, but our guys are ready for it.

**Q. You guys have obviously already gone through the film from that first game. How much of this preparation is looking back at that and what worked, what didn't, or are you more focused on, we've seen that, let's look at what Oregon's done since we played them?**

RYAN DAY: A little bit of both. A little bit of both. It's not like we played them just a couple weeks ago. This was midseason, and there's been a lot of football played since then. Like I said, I feel we've evolved. They've evolved. Different teams. So there are certainly things that you want to look at that happened in that game but also, as time's moved on, how they've changed, how we've changed and how does that fit as we put together the game plan.

But ultimately, we want to make sure that we're putting together a great game plan so our guys can play fast, they understand what we're trying to get done in terms of attacking in all three phases, and they can play with

emotion and physicality.

**Q. Along the same lines, it's rare for Ohio State to play the same team twice in one season. I think it's happened seven times only in history. Do you feel a need -- kind of dipping into your NFL experience, where you do play the same team -- do you feel like you have to change things up, throw wrinkles? Can you be just the same team you were? How does that work from a coaching standpoint when you're in those meetings of we're just going to do what we do best, or, again, are there little wrinkles and just sort of differences?**

RYAN DAY: Well, there's what we call overage, too, especially on offense, of things that we have coming out of a game that we didn't call. You always want to reference those and see your notes and see things we've already practiced this season that maybe we didn't use in that game. That plays into it.

But also things that we've done in the second half of the season that we feel like our players are comfortable with, and then what fits their scheme as they've evolved this season on defense. Again, they're not just playing the same things that they've been playing all year. They've changed and they're much more multiple in what they do. So you combine all those things together and you put the game plan in. And then you throw some things out. You add some things that you think might fit.

At the end of the day, you only have to pack what you need and you've got to make sure that it's clean and it's a plan that the guys can go execute with a lot of confidence. That's what we're in the middle of right now.

**Q. I understand that essentially Ohio State is always going to try to recruit the best players in the country, and that's going to be the foundation of your roster, but you guys have had success in the portal. There's a lot more players in the portal than ever before. How much has that changed, if at all, your strategy, how you go about high school recruiting, simply having another place where you can get very talented players?**

RYAN DAY: Well, like you said, our foundation is recruiting high school players and then developing them and retaining them. I think that when you're looking to sustain a program over a long period of time, that's the best plan for doing that.

Guys understand that. I think when you look at there's been a lot of talk about our team this year, a lot of talk about the NIL conversation, but the majority of this team,

are guys that decided to come back, not guys that decided to come to Ohio State. Certainly we did add some big pieces into the portal, and that was very important for our team, and those guys have been great members of our team and have quickly understood what it means to be Buckeyes.

But in order to have that stability, I think that you've got to recruit high school players, tell them exactly what it's going to be and then follow up and treat them exactly the way that you recruited them in the process.

But along the way, you're going to have attrition. You're going to have guys who enter the portal, and because of that you're going to have openings along the way and then you have to fill the openings. So we're very careful to do that because we know that sustainability of the program ultimately is very, very important here at Ohio State.

So all things that were taken into consideration, there will certainly be positions and needs we have in this recruiting cycle that we need to address, and we will. But we also want to make sure that they fit our culture and who we are as a program.

**Q. Luke Montgomery, the mix you had up there in the middle of the offense, did it go almost according to the way you would like it to have gone? How pleased were you with that and will you continue that do you think going into this game? You know what I'm saying? That had to work, and it did?**

RYAN DAY: It had to work, you're right. And I thought they all played well. I felt like Justin working the rotation in the way he did allowed them to play fast and get a little bit of relief getting off the field.

And I think Luke ended up with maybe 30, 31 plays. Of those 30 and 31 plays, I thought he did a nice job. Every play wasn't perfect, but there were some really good plays in there, great effort, and I could feel his presence out there, which is a big part of the offensive line. Austin played very well. Tegra had some really good plays.

I think they all worked together there. Austin was sort of our swing man, we decided to do that going into it. Austin and Tegra have played against Oregon. So there's a reference point going into this game, but they'll need to play well. And we know they have very good players inside and up front. So they've got to keep building on it. So right now as we come out of this game I would say that's going to continue the way we did that, but we'll assess it as the week goes on and see what gives us the best chance to win the game.

**Q. You talked a lot about using this game as a springboard, almost like a wild card game in the NFL, giving your team momentum. Have you felt that the last couple of days, walking into the locker room, this is a whole new vibe, whole new life getting ready for the next three games?**

RYAN DAY: You can feel the confidence in the locker room. You could feel the confidence yesterday as we had our team meetings, identify the champions, watch the film from the game, showed clips of the game with the team and then we broke up into position meetings and watched the film.

Have to make some adjustments like we always do. Issues are always there. But there was just an overall balance and confidence about the group coming off the game to know that we already have a playoff win under our belt. It will give us confidence going into the game. And also knowing our opponent I think also it gives us confidence. So all of those things led to a great day yesterday. A lot of pep in everybody's step and looking forward to a great week of preparation.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports