

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Pasadena, California, USA

Oregon Ducks Ajani Cornelius

Press Conference

Q. I don't know about the beef bowl or anything like that, but is the focus really on the game?

AJANI CORNELIUS: I know we're focussed on the game. Whatever events come with it naturally, that come mandatory, we'll participate in. But we're very focused.

Q. What's the general feeling you've got from these guys the last couple of weeks, getting ready for this game, the mental approach you're bringing?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Just want to be prepared, trust my technique, trust my coaches and my brothers, and play football.

Q. From your teammates, what have you seen these last couple of weeks from them in terms of their preparation and their mental approach?

AJANI CORNELIUS: I've been so proud of my team, just grinding hard. It's a long season, but we're not worried about that. We're just worried about continuing to play as long as we can.

Q. This is the second straight New Year's Six game for you. As a guy who transferred in from Rhode Island, what does it mean about your expectations of committing to Oregon and what does this mean to you overall?

AJANI CORNELIUS: It's an absolute blessing to be able to play at this stage and come this far. I'm just honored to be here, and just want to keep playing.

Q. It's been a hot debate -- bye week or having the game before this game. How did the bye week help you guys?

AJANI CORNELIUS: It gave us a lot of time to prepare.



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And we took advantage of that.

Q. Do you feel more mentally or I guess more physically fresh too?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Absolutely.

Q. What's it meant to you to see the growth of this offensive line this year from where you guys started to where you are now?

AJANI CORNELIUS: That's a good question. I'm proud of my guys. We work hard -- not everybody sees the inside of everything. But, like I said, I'm proud. So many guys have stepped up, like Kawika and Dave Iuli and Mark (phonetic) coming back in the rotation and just a bunch of tough guys in the room. Proud of this group.

Q. What has been the key for you guys to get to the level you're at?

AJANI CORNELIUS: I think our connection. That's one of the biggest things that's on our team is how connected we are with each other and how much we believe in each other. And we want to see each other succeed.

Q. What can you say about those guys, Kawika and Dave, stepping in, didn't play all year, and stepped in and played a large role? And Nishad was probably going to be a reserve before he settled the line down I think in week three. Those guys in particular, what have they meant for this line?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Absolute soldiers. They'll do whatever it takes to see us succeed. Like I said, that's all we need to do. No matter what it takes, no matter who we have to put out there, they'll be prepared and ready. (Indiscernible) as soldiers.

Q. Do you have memories of the Rose Bowl as a kid, watching the game with your family? And what's that (indiscernible) for you?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Just being a part of this College Football Playoffs is something special. Watching it growing

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up, it's really exciting to be a part of it in real life.

Q. Is this your first time in LA?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Not my first time. But one of my first times coming out here.

Q. When was your first time coming to LA?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Probably playing UCLA.

Q. What do you remember about the first meeting, as close as it was? The field-rushing after the game, one-point game, what do you remember about it?

AJANI CORNELIUS: What I remember, it was an intense game. It was close. It was competitive. That's what you want as a competitor, as a football player. So it was an exciting game to be a part of and looking forward to playing again.

Q. Have you talked to any of the players on your defensive front and if they had any advice about the issues that the Ohio State pass rush is going to present?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Yes, just going against them every day naturally. I feel like we've got some of the best edge rushers, too. It's been a real privilege being able to play against Burch and Matayo in practice. They've been getting us ready for anybody we might face.

Q. The Ohio State game, the Michigan game, the Penn State game, two teams were able to get pressure on Dillon. How much have you pride that? You've played some elite edges and won all three of them?

AJANI CORNELIUS: Like I said, just trust our coaches and trust our technique and play ball. That's all we want to do.

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