

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Oregon Ducks Coach Dan Lanning Press Conference

Q. Since playing Ohio State the last time what stands out most how they look differently, losing to Michigan, beating Tennessee, what's most different about this Ohio State team you're going to face on the 1st?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I mean, every game has an identity into itself. And obviously watching this most recent game, Ohio State played really well. They have a lot of strengths. They're really good on both sides of the ball and on special teams.

I think what you recognize when you watch the film is a team that has a lot of strengths and a team that's really talented and really good.

Q. You've always been a person concerned about not just the physical aspects of the game but the mental aspects of the game. You recently were visited by Tim Grover who quotes Michael Jordan, (indiscernible) Kobe Bryant, what was it like to experience that for you and your team, to experience his words and what he had to say?

DAN LANNING: Tim is a guy I've gotten close to over the last couple of years. He does an unbelievable job being able to deliver a message. I think he sees things black and white, which I certainly appreciate. And I'm glad that he was able to share a message with our team.

Q. You talk about the resumé you guys have generated. Coming into the number one position in the nation, how do you maintain that? And what will be the ingredients to come out victorious against Ohio State?

DAN LANNING: The way you maintain it is you win. You do it by focusing on each play, each moment, not making it bigger than it is. Just trying to make sure that you can maintain your focus on what your job is. Everybody has a



**PLAYOFF
QUARTERFINAL**



job for the team, doing that job for your team. If we do that things will go the right way.

Q. What did you think of the Big Ten when you first entered into it, the perception of it? And having played through it, where are you now with that? If you could also talk about team goals what you guys expect to do every year.

DAN LANNING: First off, I had an outside looking of the Big Ten. It's a conference I had a lot of respect for, obviously some great teams.

I think the history of this conference is unique and special, something we're really excited to be a part of. And I've been extremely impressed with the leadership from Tony Petitti, the commissioner, and everybody from that standpoint as well as the opportunity to go play against teams in some unbelievable venues. And all those things have been really rewarding.

I think it's a physical conference. It's obviously one of the best conferences, if not the best conference in college football. So I'm glad that we get to be a part of it.

Our goal is just to always play to our best, don't focus on the result, but focus on the process. If we're playing our best football, the rest takes care much itself.

Q. Walk through the philosophy of moving the defensive line. You have big guys -- a lot of those -- (indiscernible) what you were looking for?

DAN LANNING: I think to be able to play great football, regardless of conference, especially down the stretch, you've got to have great size, you have to have great athleticism. We look for guys that fit us character mold and then also have those attributes -- size, speed, the ability to anchor in a conference that's a physical conference and down the stretch when it matters the most.

Q. You don't have to defend Dillon Gabriel as a team. How would you defend him if you were going against Dillon Gabriel?



DAN LANNING: I wouldn't tell you that. But Dillon is obviously an unbelievable player. I think he's a really hard player to defend because of the things that he can do, the decisions that he makes. The moments that he shows up in pressure moments, I think that's where he shines the most, which is really important at that position -- his poise and confidence in those moments. And then his trust in the guys around him.

Q. As the program has increased, gotten better, reached the status it has, do you feel more pressure now than you did or where do you put that pressure?

DAN LANNING: I think you hope that you can feel that pressure. If you're in moments like this, you're certainly going to feel pressure. I think anybody who says they're not, they're lying.

But that's what you want to coach towards. You want to be in positions where pressure is applied. And Kirby said it before but I agree with him: Pressure is a privilege. If you put yourself in position to where you're going to have pressure, that's something you have to be able to handle. And our team's handled it really well so far, have to continue to do so down the stretch.

Q. (Question about Jordan James.)

DAN LANNING: I'd probably say Jordan's leadership. Jordan has been a great runner for us. He's taken advantage of a lot of moments. When the ball's in his hand, he's played well.

The way he practices is the part that nobody gets to see. Jordan James practices extremely hard. He's the guy, when the whistle blows at practice, he's going to run another 20 yards after that. He has the right mindset.

He wants to come out and work every day. Even if he's dinged up he's not the guy that's going to be on the sideline. So his availability and his leadership and then the way he practices, I think, really shows up for our team.

Q. (Inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: I think for our entire team they were able to incorporate some rest and recovery, which is really big. But there's also a lot of work in there, too. He's the guy that's going to want to push rather than rest in his sleep and he's not that guy.

Q. (Inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: I think there's talented players on our team before. But we identified there's some areas we

wanted to improve and get better. There's no secret that the best teams in college football have the best players.

So you want to improve at every position. Certainly defensive line, offensive line.

I think a lot of that comes from competition. When there's one great player at a position, you know that player can be a really good player. But when you have two great players at a position, they push each other. They make each other better.

I think we have a lot more of that on our team than when we first got here.

Q. (Question about Big Ten guys, motivation.)

DAN LANNING: I'm sure our players are aware of that.

Q. You talked about pressure, being in places like Georgia and Alabama where you lose one game it's a cardinal sin. How much did that prepare you for what you guys are going through?

DAN LANNING: I'd say just in general, all of my coaching experience I've leaned on in different situations, certainly prepared me for those moments.

Q. What's the process of picking the game uniforms each week? I know a lot of times when it comes to what coaches wear, it's what shows up at the locker room. But how do you determine that?

DAN LANNING: I couldn't answer that question. Kenny Farr is our equipment manager. He does an unbelievable job. I know he leans on our players, but I normally just give thumbs up or thumbs down, and I don't really ever give thumbs down.

Q. You're responsible for a rule change this year. I know you (inaudible) after the Ohio State game. Did you go through how that came about in meetings (inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: We talk about a ton of situations, that being one of them. We've got to continue to adapt to what rules exist in college football, make sure you can take advantage of them when you have the opportunity.

Q. You didn't have Jordan Burch the first time against Ohio State. How much does he change what it is you do? We know what a great player he is, but how does it change you structurally?

DAN LANNING: You just said it; we all know he's a great



player. When we have him we're at more full strength. And we have a lot of talented players in those positions, but goes back to what I talked about -- the competition it creates for us in practice and the ability to make sure that we're fresh in games in critical moments.

When you have talented players like Jordan that can perform at a high level and have great players around him as well, that allows us to be our best.

Q. How has Matayo progressed during the season? He's put up big numbers as well.

DAN LANNING: Anybody who watched Matayo realizes we've got a special player there. And more than just a player, he's a great teammate. And the way, again, the way he works every single day, I think people have a lot of trust in him when he's on the field. He's shown some versatility.

I don't know if people recognize the amount of things that we ask Matayo to do. And really Teitum and Jordan, there's several guys in that same light that we ask them to do a lot of different things. They've done it extremely well this year.

Q. Where do you think you guys are better or where are you guys different from the first time you played these guys?

DAN LANNING: Great question. Our team's about growth. We hammer that a lot in our meetings. I'd like to think there's a lot of things we've improved on since that moment.

I don't know if there's one overall arching thing that you would look at and say, okay, this is where they drastically changed, because I don't think that's what it's about. Growth comes in incremental pieces.

But I think we've grown in a lot of areas. I think we've challenged ourselves to continue to change and adapt based on the teams that we're playing.

The amount of information that our players are able to handle, I think, is probably one of the most stark differences in our team now compared to when I first got here that we can -- there's no such thing as information overload for our guys. If we can give them a nugget that will help them perform in the game, our guys are really able to absorb that really well.

Q. How are they able (inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: A lot of repetition and a lot of work. We

talk about playing the game as many times as you can before you play the game. So treating that walk-through like it's a game, treating that film session like it's a game. Communicating in the meeting the same way you'll compete and communicate on the game field. And I think our guys do an unbelievable job of creating that.

Q. What do you take from film from the first meeting?

DAN LANNING: There's a lot of moments in those games that we could have been better. I think that's probably one of the biggest things I walked away with -- a missed a field goal, a botched snap, probably an opportunity for me to be able to kick the ball down there when we're tight to the red area. Last time I think we scored two touchdowns in five trips to the red zone. That's an area we can certainly improve and be better.

But ultimately coming out with a victory in a tight game, I think that tells you a little bit about our team as well. But realizing there's some moments we left out there and things that we can attack and improve on.

Q. I've asked all the coaches that are involved in this, at the beginning of the season did you have a calendar of until January 20th what you guys do each day, assuming you get there?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we have a 365-day calendar that's kind of always running. And I think the big thing for a coach is you have to be able to adapt. It's not going to be always the exact same.

But we had an outline of what it would look like based on if we're in this game, outline of what it would look like based on if we were in a game earlier. So, we have a lot of different plans that we're able to execute. And being in position to where you can adapt that plan based on the needs of your team.

Q. Neither team had a big body of work when you guys played the first time. As you watch them on tape now, what has changed? What looks different? How are they compared to when you played them the first time?

DAN LANNING: I think there's still a lot of similarities. Obviously there's talent across the board, and it's one of those teams where it's hard to take away a strength because they have strengths opposite that strength of schedule -- obviously a really good run game, obviously great wideouts, defensively they change it up quite a bit, make it tough on you as an opponent.

I think more than anything it's probably just accentuated



what you've already seen from their team.

Q. Is there an advantage or disadvantage playing a conference foe in this type of game knowing what you're going to get or (indiscernible)?

DAN LANNING: I don't know that I necessarily look at it that way, but playing a team that you're familiar with, there's certainly some advantages, too. But on the same note they're familiar with us as well. So I think all that stuff kind of goes to the side.

Q. Any more hole-in-ones?

DAN LANNING: No golf for a long time right now.

Q. You just went through your first year in the Big Ten. What are some of the differences from playing in the Big Ten compared with your last year in the Pac-12?

DAN LANNING: I mean, obviously the caliber of teams. I think people will point to that and say there's better teams in the Big Ten in comparison. But in reality football is football. I think there were some great teams that made the trip with us to this conference as well.

So two strong conferences, two conferences that play good football. Obviously one of them's still around.

And the thing you'd say about this conference is that it does have a great variety of what success looks like. You can win in a lot of different ways in this conference. There's some teams that are ground-and-pound teams in this conference. There's teams that throw the ball. There's a lot of different defensive schemes.

So I think the variety more than anything sticks out that you have to be able to prepare for different situations, different moments throughout the season when you play the teams in this conference.

Q. What went through your mind when you saw you might be getting these guys (inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: I think excitement. When you get to play great teams, I think you're really pumped. And to be at this venue, the Rose Bowl, to play a team like Ohio State, I think that's what you coach for. Those are the moments that you want to be a part of.

Q. When you think back to the last two years, the losses you had, really close, what did you learn as a head coach about losing those close games and translating it forward?

DAN LANNING: A ton. If you're not learning, you're hurting yourself. So ultimately, decision-making process, how you prepare your teams. There's a lot of pieces that I've adapted a little bit different just based on the team and where we're at.

But I also think our team's in a lot different situation from emotional maturity and how we handle those moments. And, like I said, our team's been about growth. I think that's really shown up this year. So we try to learn from those moments and adapt.

Q. In terms of adapting and getting a feel of what your team is like in terms of maturity, how long did it take you to get that feel? How long does it take you for you to get that understanding?

DAN LANNING: Every team's different. Next year our team will be completely different as well. I think the season tells that story. And throughout the season you continue to identify if your team's going to keep growing, adapting and changing.

Q. In the first match-up against Ohio State, there was a point that (indiscernible) were left out on the field, it was very much a seesaw battle. Knowing this one, how do you manage the game as it's going on to make sure you don't leave points on the field and don't beat yourself in this match-up?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, that's always the double-edged sword. I think a lot of it comes down to how confident you are in your plan.

You look at that game, there were some critical fourth downs that we converted that were huge for us. And there were some that we left opportunities there on the board as well.

So I think you have to assess every one of those individually and make sure you understand how confident are you and what you're going to see from the opponent, how much success have you had in those schemes in practice and then making sure you assess all those things as you go into the game.

Q. Go back to that aggressive gene, I think that's one of your strongest traits, that you're not afraid to go for it. But you've seemingly matured this season and gotten a lot more success with your team making sure they execute in those situations. How has that process evolved from your first (indiscernible) where it bit you against Washington and Oregon State to now where it just seems like you know what you're going to



do? You've got your team prepared and there's more success.

DAN LANNING: I would say that, the success works. When it doesn't work, people let you know that it doesn't work. When it does work people say you're mature now.

We've gone for it on fourth down this year as well. Sometimes it's worked; sometimes it hasn't. In the last game we played against Ohio State, sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't.

I don't really get caught up on what other people's opinions are. To me it's about our process. Was our process right. We try to be process oriented over results oriented.

If we have a good process it doesn't work out right, sometimes have you to live with those results. Everything in our program we assess the good and the bad and what it's going to look like when you step out on the field.

Q. So you were just saying it's not about the results, but in a way it is about the results because you don't get the results and that compounds over time then you have to relook at the process, don't you?

DAN LANNING: If the process was wrong. So like process would mean, did the guy run the right route. Did we have what we thought was going to be able to be executed. Let's say you have one-on-one coverage; did you get one-on-one coverage?

If the process was wrong, you go back and evaluate that. If the result's wrong, why was the result wrong? Was it a technique? Was it somebody not throwing the ball where it was supposed to be thrown? Did somebody miss, not execute within that?

I think you look at it all. It's not just a small lens, did it work or not work. There's plays that have worked for us this season where the process wasn't great. And that was a great result, but that doesn't mean it was the right call.

Q. We asked you a lot at media day about recruiting. I know it might not be top of mind now but what have you learned in your years of coaching about how to handle a recruiting landscape that feels like every six months there's some fundamental change?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, be ready to adapt. Be ready to change. It's not going to be the same six months from now as it is today. But communication rules all. You need to make sure that, I think in this landscape a lot of people make excuses.

Ultimately what you have to be able to do is make sure that you're not that team that's creating those excuses, that you're the team that's on the attack looking for opportunities to improve your team.

Q. There have been recruits you've got, McNutt, very talented pulled him out of a backyard. Typically Ohio State (indiscernible) when you recruit guys like that (indiscernible) things like that. What goes into convincing them that you guys are the best fit for them and maybe not a preconceived notion of, I have to go to this school or go to that school?

DAN LANNING: One, it's about finding the right kid. But I'm not in the business of convincing. I'm in the business of finding the right guy that's looking for the right opportunity. And are they strong enough to pursue the right opportunity? I think Trey saw some things exist here at Oregon that he wanted to be a part of.

Q. Obviously, you've got one of the most experienced players in college football sitting to your right over here. How much have you seen that maturity and experience from Dillon uplift not just him but his teammates this year in moments like these big games?

DAN LANNING: A ton. I think there's several moments we could point to this season where his experience has shown up and he's created a lot of success for us on the field. I've said it several times, but I think that's one of Dillon's strongest traits is his poise.

Q. What have you noticed about the way Dillon and Dante have grown together, how that sets up the program for the future?

DAN LANNING: Connection is one of our DNA traits. And I think it's really shown with those guys, how they operate day in, day out in practice. One thing that both those guys do a phenomenal job of, as well as everybody on our team, is spending time with their teammates outside of football and working to create those moments.

Q. Can he get Dante out on the golf course with him?

DAN LANNING: I'm sure he could. They probably have been out there before.

Q. James Franklin said yesterday at the Fiesta media days that college football needs a commissioner. (Indiscernible). Do you think they need an overall commissioner? And, number two, would you (indiscernible)? Third, James Franklin and Lane Kiffin's suggestion of Nick Saban assuming the role?

DAN LANNING: I don't really know. Sure, it would be great to have one, I guess. What's the job entail? What are they really doing?

It's certainly furthest thing from my mind right now.

I would say this. Nick is a great advocate for the game. He obviously understands what's good for football. So I think that he has a great voice for college football.

Q. How does it help having an experienced tight end like what you guys have?

DAN LANNING: I feel we have one of the best, if not the best tight end rooms in the nation. It starts with how they prepare. They're extremely well coached. Coach Mehringer does an unbelievable job with those guys.

But really a selfless group. They embrace their strengths. They all want to go out there see the team have success. So it's been a big advantage for us this season.

Q. What about Patrick Herbert?

DAN LANNING: Just that, exactly what I said about selflessness, the ability to play injured. This guy's had a lot of injuries through his career people don't realize -- broken fingers, messed-up shoulders. He's dealt with a lot. And despite all that he's always been out there on the field and available for us and does an unbelievable job out there competing on the field.

Q. How does it feel to be back in the Rose Bowl. I know you were here two to three months ago, but it's kind of a different setting now?

DAN LANNING: This certainly is different. It's great to be in a venue that we've played in. But this is a unique experience for me. This will be my first Rose Bowl that I get to be a part of.

And this is "The Granddaddy of Them All," so this is the one you're excited to be a part of.

Q. Any Rose Bowls that stick out to you that you remember watching?

DAN LANNING: There's so many great ones. I don't know that I would pick one that's the highlight. But listening to Jackson say "The Granddaddy of Them All" is pretty special every time you hear that.

Q. Obviously each season you want to take it one game at a time, but you guys have gotten this far being undefeated. You guys are this close to finishing that

job. What is the added pressure to that (indiscernible) what you're doing as far as running this program? And how are you handling that and not letting it get to your players as well?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, you treat it like it's another game. Certainly there's a lot of external factors that I think people are aware of and certainly pay attention to. But for us, ultimately, our process isn't broken. Our process has been really good all season. And we have to remember what got us here, what got us to this moment.

So, continuing to focus on the details, making sure that our Tuesday practice looks like a normal Tuesday practice. And competing out there on the practice field is going to lead to successful results in games.

Q. Talking to Dillon, he said it's like the most beautiful grass he's ever played on. You like playing on grass as opposed to turf?

DAN LANNING: I'm not playing. I don't know.

Q. If you were?

DAN LANNING: I think players certainly enjoy playing on grass. Yeah, it's great.

Q. Your first time in this game, one of the premier bowl games. How is it for you as a coach?

DAN LANNING: It's special, you hope at the beginning of the season you get opportunities to play in games like this, so having this opportunity for our team -- I'm glad that, in my position, what you get to enjoy is the coaches on your staff that have never been in a game like this, the players on your staff that have never been in a game, and hoping everybody recognizes what a special opportunity it is for them.

Q. (Indiscernible) a kid growing up, a special Rose Bowl?

DAN LANNING: I just had this question. Not really just the magnitude of the Rose Bowl in general, what that means and getting to be a part of it.

Q. (Inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: Very special. When I first got hired here, it's one thing Phil always talked about. He talked about external pressure. He talked about, look, all I'd love to do is to have an opportunity to be in the Rose Bowl, win a Rose Bowl.

So getting to be here for Phil, I know what that means to him. It certainly means a ton to me, out of my respect for him and out of respect for the University of Oregon.

Q. Does the Ohio State defense look any different to you guys versus the first time you played them?

DAN LANNING: I do, I do think -- one thing Coach Knowles does an unbelievable job of is they have a lot of variety. And I think when you watch them play, you realize, okay, they're trying to take away another team's strengths.

And they'll adapt. They'll create new schemes for other teams' strength. I think you saw them play some defense last week that they haven't played as much of this past season.

And that's just a great indicator of their willingness to adapt and change based on the opponent's strengths.

We're going to have to identify quickly how do they plan to attack us, how do they plan to play us.

Q. Did you go into this thinking maybe this game plays out a little different than the last one and that's a template for this game?

DAN LANNING: I would say every game has an identity to itself. And certainly this game will be different on both sides of the ball. I'm sure we have different elements of our game that will be different. And I know they'll have different elements of their game that will be different as well.

Q. (Inaudible)?

DAN LANNING: Jordan's a great player. So I'm certainly excited about him being a part of this game for us and glad that we have him back.

Q. (Question about videos.) Where does that come from and what have you learned at that point?

DAN LANNING: Ultimately, I think it's our job as coaches to be able to deliver a similar message each week but keep it fresh for our guys.

A lot of times, the undertone doesn't necessarily change but making sure we keep it fresh for our team, I think, is really important. We try to be really diligent with that and that process. And ultimately, I would say a lot of that can be overrated. The reality is you have to go out there and execute on the field, but it is our job as coaches to keep it fresh.

Q. Where do you get the inspiration, the references, the things you bring in?

DAN LANNING: We'll look anywhere and everywhere. But I'll say, ultimately, for me I've been around a lot of great coaches, just learning that piece of how can you keep something fresh for your guys, I think, is really important.

Q. In your preparation for the game, what excites you the most and what concerns you the most, if you have any concerns?

DAN LANNING: The opportunity is what excites me the most. Just getting the opportunity to play against, like I said, a great team. Go out there, leave it all out on the field, make sure your best can be good enough.

And to play a team like Ohio State in this bowl game, I think, is really special. I don't have a ton of concerns. Ultimately, the piece that you want is you want to make sure your guys go out there and they play their best. If they do that, then I think the rest takes care of itself.

Q. What would you say to all your friends, family and fans?

DAN LANNING: Just that I love you, right? I wouldn't be sitting in the chair I'm sitting in, extremely blessed to get to do what I do, and every one of those people make that special for us.

Q. What has made you become the great coach that you've become?

DAN LANNING: I wouldn't put myself in that category. But I would say, ultimately, I have a lot of great people around me, right? Great coaches have great players. Great coaches have other great coaches around them. And this organization, in general, we have an unbelievable organization, a lot of people that are working to achieve the same goal. They get up every day to go do their job and it really starts with our players, and then that's accentuated with our coaches and the staff around our coaches.

Q. When you first were talking to Dillon about him coming here, was this what you envisioned for him?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think a lot of things that have played out this season for our team and for Dillon are the things that you hope you can recreate, and he's done an unbelievable job of taking advantage of those opportunities.

Q. What was it about him, like, not on the field, but off the field, kind of his character, that really wanted you

to want him to come here?

DAN LANNING: I mean, really the person that Dillon is, you mentioned it, off the field. First thing that Dillon did when he got here is he spent time connecting with his teammates. He found moments to go have a dinner with a guy, found an opportunity to go do an offensive retreat with his team, building those relationships first, and then the rest on the field kind of takes care of itself once you have those genuine relationships.

Q. How has he become more of a leader and how comfortable has he gotten with the offense?

DAN LANNING: Just grows with time. Like I said, we talk a lot about growth in our program. He's continued to grow over time with his team, get better and better every single day, build confidence in himself and in the scheme that we're carrying, and I think that's shown up for us in big moments this year.

Q. Is there any extra motivation for your players that you guys are the number one team, you beat this team already and you're undefeated, but you're still viewed as an underdog in this game?

DAN LANNING: Not concerned about outside noise. I would say ultimately, like, you've got to go play the games. That's something we're excited about.

Q. How hard is it beating a team twice; is that more of a challenge that you've already beat them?

DAN LANNING: I think anytime you play a great team, there's a challenge. But I think there's also some myths about those challenges. We're just excited about the opportunity to get out there on the field and play these guys.

Q. If you do go on, let's say you win the national championship, do you feel that lifts something off your guys' back as a program?

DAN LANNING: I'm not there yet. I'm focused on this game first.

Q. Have you seen any good movies recently?

DAN LANNING: Over Christmas we watched "Four Christmases." That's not bad.

Q. What's been on rotation this year?

DAN LANNING: Not a ton. Not a lot of movies during football season.

Q. Do you think there's one that summarizes the Rose Bowl at all?

DAN LANNING: A movie?

Q. A plot line that you're looking to push on this one?

DAN LANNING: We certainly have a theme this week, but, no, I wouldn't say there's one in particular.

Q. What's your favorite sports movie?

DAN LANNING: Probably "Friday Night Lights." I'd say that's up there. "Remember the Titans."

Q. Do you have a favorite line from "Remember the Titans"?

DAN LANNING: Not necessarily, no.

Q. I thought maybe as a defensive guy (indiscernible)?

DAN LANNING: That's a great one.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports