

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Oregon Ducks

Jabbar Muhammad

Press Conference

Q. Round two here against Ohio State. What do you feel like you learned from that first opportunity against the Buckeyes?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Honestly the game could just go any type of way, a slugfest, down to the last play no matter what it is. But at the end of the day, we've played a lot of greed gritty games this year so I feel like we're prepared for the moment.

Q. What have you learned?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like we learned a lot. We can win different ways. We have had offense win us games, defense win us games. I feel like we can prepare for any type of moment.

Q. When you look back at how this season started, Week 1 against Idaho to where you are now, what are you most proud of how your team has grown?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like you can definitely say that we've grown and learned from our mistakes. Atlanta didn't let us be down in the dumps when stuff didn't go our way.

But at the end of the day, we knew the team we had in the locker room and the talent that we have and the brotherhood we had and it was a matter of time before it all came together.

Q. What has Coach Lupoi brought to the team? What's he like off the field?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: He's definitely the same off the camera, too. The intensity that he brings to practice; the intensity that he brings to the game. But at the end of the day, he's a great motivator and he's a great teacher. I've never had a defensive coach, so the intensity that he



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brings to the defensive side of the ball is amazing.

And as far as off the field, man, I feel like he's one of us, you know what I mean. He's hip to the new era of things. I feel like he's on social media and things like that as well. So it's pretty cool.

Q. "Going to the Doctor," something he says quite often, talk about the things you guys have to get better at and improve on. If you were "Going to the Doctor" this week, what are you putting under the microscope?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Man, honestly, just to go out there and just be physical. Just go out there and play our own game. Be worry-free. We know the moment is pretty big but like I said, we are built for this. So we're excited for the matchup.

Q. What do you feel like is a strength of this team? -

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like we're gritty. I feel like that goes unnoticed. I feel like we're a really gritty group. We're physical. We put a lot of hard work into the preparation and things like that. So excited that we can play free and win.

Q. That first matchup, so much is made of the explosiveness that Ohio State has with the receiver group, but what's your mindset like when you know a challenge like that? Is that something that you relish at this stage?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like everybody is excited for it you know what I mean. It's not often that you get to go against a veteran guy like that.

Obviously I do in practice every single day but those guys are just as exciting. They can make every catch. They are a really good tight end receiving core. You can tell they play for each other and things like that. We are excited for the matchup.

Q. The subject of culture and connection, you guys have talked about it. Dillon talked about it coming to an end at the right time ahead of this playoff. What's



your feel of that?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I agree but I feel like at the same time we have been a connected team since I got here. Getting to know each other, coming to his house and having dinner, the camaraderie we built together, going to somebody's house and cooking foiled and things like that, and just getting to know your brother off the field is really important.

Q. What sticks out to you?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I would say off the field, a lot of us, the DBs came together and came to my crib. Dante cooked at my crib and we all had fellowship, watching games, playing games and things like that. Those are memories that you always have and the memory, the day before the game we at the hotel. We all get to somebody's room and chilling and just chop it up. Talk about whatever it is we want to talk about. I feel like that stuff you will remember forever.

Q. Seems like it carries over on the field. Do you feel that?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Yeah, for sure. I feel like when you know your brother's why, you know why they are doing that, why they are playing the sport, I feel like you can go harder, you know what I mean, just knowing that whatever they have been through, whatever they are going through, you know exactly what it is.

Q. And you said Dante is the cook?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Yeah, he can cook. We had some rotel (ph) -- I don't know if we should be eating it. We had some rotel but it be pretty good. We had some rotel.

Q. All of the pressure, the big stage that this might be, what role does the culture aspect play in making those sort of things easier?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like it plays a big role. Obviously we have been in some gritty games this year, and I feel like we're tough we're a gritty team and can win games in multiple ways. And I feel like when we have that, that shows up, you can kind of prepare for anything.

Q. The first time you met, obviously that was a gritty game, high-powered offense, high-powered defense, pretty memorable, what do you remember in that first game?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like first game I remember

almost everything. Honestly I just remember it, the intensity that the game is played at, you know what I mean. It was a high-level game, high-level play calling, high-level scheming, all type of high-level stuff, and you don't really get that often. When you get that opportunity, you got to cherish it.

Q. With that, you guys take pride that was a high-scoring game. Do you guys think back to that at all, making it better against the same offense?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Sure. We have this thing called we "Go to the Doctor." We went to the doctor on that game multiple times and we learn from our mistakes I feel like. But at the end of the day, they could do something totally different. So we just prepare for whatever comes our way.

Q. Is there something specifically you got from the doctor for that game?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I would say eliminating some explosives. They had a good amount of explosives that game and we have to eliminate those.

Q. What are the challenges that come --

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Obviously the challenges, they are familiar with you and they know your personnel and know what you can do and they have played against you. So they can try to attack certain things in the first game.

But at the end of the day, you know what I'm saying, it boils down to scheme. I don't think they are going to the same thing again and we are probably not going to do the same thing again, you know what I mean. Just learning from the first game and just trying to take whatever you can from that.

Q. Will Howard was saying he feels like they are just being themselves. How do you take that?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: We try to go out there and be the best version of ourselves.

Q. Obviously this is the last time you play Oregon, as far as learning from that win, but also continue to up your level with the defensive intensity.

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: For sure. Last game wasn't our best and we know that. But we just use that as motivation you know what I mean. We know what our best looks like and we know what our best looks like on film so we have to go out execute and be ourselves.

Q. Tim Grover has visited you guys. He's worked with

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant. What do you take away from that experience?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Just the way you do one thing is the way you do everything. The energy that you bring is really important. But I learned a lot just knowing he was around all those greats, Michael Jordan, Kobe. He worked with D-Wade, as well. He was around those greats and knows what it looks like. So it was cool to talk to him.

Q. What do you take away from Jordan and Kobe that you can put into your arsenal?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I would say the mentality. Especially me, I play corner, it can kind lonely sometimes and it can get bad sometimes. Just having that mentality, you know the work that you put in, the work that you put into this, it will come full circle if you just put your head down and grind.

Q. Do moments like these ever sink in, sitting there, answering questions on a stage about the Rose Bowl.

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Honestly it's just a dream come true, you know what I mean. I've been a football fan my whole life, what I can remember. Moments like this, you don't really cherish it until probably after. But right now living in a moment, it's a blessing and a dream come true and I'm happy to be here.

Q. What kind of challenge does Ohio State's wide receiver present and what looks similar to them, the depth?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: They present a tremendous challenge. They have wide-outs that can do everything. They have speedsters and guys that can run every route, and they have guys that can just make connects down the field and things like that. They present a really good challenge for us.

As far as receivers that we've seen like them this year, I feel like we've seen a few receivers from different teams. They might not have the depth that Ohio State has, but we've seen some pretty good receivers this year.

Q. What jumps out --

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Obviously he's a physical specimen but what jumps out is his downfield ability, the ability to check the ball and play strong throughout the routes and things like that. Things you don't normally see from a freshman. He presents a good challenge.

Obviously we have to play one of our best games. This is

a really talented team. A team that's obviously on a roll right now and playing really good. Just go out there can don't let the moment be too big. Execute the game plan.

Q. What's your inspiration in life?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I would probably say my parents, everything they sacrificed for me and all the lessons they taught me and all the hard work they put in for me to be here and all the sacrifices for me.

When you're young, it kind of goes unnoticed. But now I'm older, I'm grateful for it and I let them know that I appreciate them every single day.

Q. What's your motivation in life that drives you?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I would probably say, the phrase that I live on is what's meant for you will not pass you by. A lot of times you're young, like me I was under recruited, so I was always, "Why not me? Why not me?"

But at the end of the day, like I said, what's meant for you will not pass you by. I'm here for a reason. My journey has led me here and I'm blessed for it.

I feel like I capitalize on every opportunity that came my way. God put me for a reason, like I said earlier, and I'm blessed to be here.

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

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I appreciate them. It's been a long journey. It's my senior year, my last year, and hoping to go out with a bang.

Q. Facing Smith, what did you take away from that first matchup against him? What did you learn?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like within that offense, I feel like he's real comfortable within it. You don't normally see that from a freshman. He's real comfortable within the offense. He knows all the plays and he's not out there second-guessing himself and he's out there with a ton of confidence and making plays.

Q. Do you watch every snap? How go about facing a dude like that?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: I feel like you try to get every nugget that you can, sit down and watch film with the coaches and try to pick their brain a little bit.

By the end of the day, you're not out there playing and find



whatever you can find within the film. Find the big things and the tendencies and things like that, and just go out there and just play your game.

Q. Is that something that you want to face one-on-one or do you feel like you almost need to help on him?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Whatever the call is, we going to execute it.

Q. Safe to say he's been a big focus of your preparation?

JABBAR MUHAMMAD: Yeah, the whole offense. They have play-makers around the whole offense. They have got guys around the outside, they have good running backs and a good quarterback. We focusing on all of them.

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