

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Oregon Ducks Derrick Harmon Press Conference

Q. Your thoughts on Big Ten versus Big Ten Rose Bowl. You've already played these guys. You know who they are. They know who you are. Just your thoughts.

DERRICK HARMON: What an opportunity it is to play these guys. Two Big Ten teams playing in the playoffs, deep in the playoffs too. What an opportunity it is for both teams and for the conference really.

Q. Starting off with Michigan State, obviously the goal always was to get to the Rose Bowl.

DERRICK HARMON: Yes, sir.

Q. What does it mean, even though this is a quarterfinal, not a championship or anything like that, what does that mean to you personally?

DERRICK HARMON: Personally, like I said, coming from State through the transfer portal, that was something you seen walking through the hallways at State was the Rose Bowl win that those guys got. So you always had the imagination that I want to get there, just like the guys before me got there.

What a blessing it is that I'm here, just not with that team but with a different team. Couldn't be happier.

Q. Do you remember how old you were when you watched your first Rose Bowl on TV as a kid?

DERRICK HARMON: I don't have a story for that.

Q. When you guys went against Ohio State the first time you didn't have Jordan Burch. How is the line different is it with Jordan in the lineup?

DERRICK HARMON: It's very different. When you got a



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guy like that who can set the edge like that and rush the passer, that's a different weapon.

Q. Ohio State's gone through a lot of offensive line configurations this year. When you watch them on tape now, what are your impressions of Ohio State's offensive line?

DERRICK HARMON: Those are some dogs they got up there. Those guys, last game they was moving people in the trenches the last game they played. That's a good group.

Q. Then Matayo, he's somebody who's really come on as a young guy. What have you seen out of him defensively? You normally don't get young guys in this role. What's that been like?

DERRICK HARMON: Just for Matayo, like you said, he's a young guy. And to be able to do what he's doing as a young guy, so you can just imagine when he gets to an older age what he can do and how he can really impact the game.

Q. When you think about the uniforms you guys are rocking for this game?

DERRICK HARMON: I like them. It's Oregon.

Q. When I go out and cover recruiting, all the players -- Florida, Texas, wherever, they've got all the uniforms. Was that something -- when did you notice that?

DERRICK HARMON: Really a kid seeing that Oregon had the best uniforms. That's always something I thought of and made me want to be at Oregon.

Q. Coach Lanning, what is he like? We get to see little bits and pieces. You get to spend a lot of time around him. What's Coach Lanning like?

DERRICK HARMON: He's a player coach for sure, great coach. He can connect with players any way no matter what background they have. That's what I love about

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Coach Lanning. He connects with players in any shape or form.

Q. You guys played a difficult schedule this year. You played Boise. You played Ohio State. You played Penn State in the Big Ten Championship game. Are you guys battle tested?

DERRICK HARMON: I believe so, yes, sir.

Q. What were some of the biggest challenges this year for you just in terms of the wear and tear and everything else? That you go through in a 13-game season so far.

DERRICK HARMON: It's really you have to be on top of your body language, that's all it is. You have to be up front about your body. That's one thing they preach to us. You have to be up front with your body.

Once you get to the next level, you have to do the same thing. So just getting acclimated to that now for the guy who's going to the next level.

Q. When you came here in the spring, is this what you anticipated, a moment like this?

DERRICK HARMON: It's something that I dreamed of, thought of, visualized. Now that we're here officially, it's just unreal.

Q. This season was so special. How does it feel to be on this team?

DERRICK HARMON: I would say it's a dream come true, but I really believe it's a testament to my work ethic and to the guys around me really.

Q. Those guys around you, a lot of talent as well. You have Jamaree on one side and (no microphone)?

DERRICK HARMON: A lot. Just to have those big guys with the skill set they have next to you, it's like you can't slide one way, you can't slide this way. They're going to give us matchups and somebody that I want one-on-one. It's unreal.

Q. (No microphone)?

DERRICK HARMON: I think everybody got better throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, we all had something that we all -- each player had something to work on just from a technique standpoint, just little errors in their game. I feel like we got better each and every week. Each week I felt like the D-line, the whole team got better.

Q. What do you feel you got better at?

DERRICK HARMON: Really I would say taking on my leader role more. Just trying to be more of a leader in the room. The young guys look up to me, so just trying to really take on that leader role basically.

Q. You've had excellent pressure with the defensive line this year. What did you work on with the pass rush at the beginning of the season that just made you better?

DERRICK HARMON: That was something I did want to work on coming in to be sure I could rush the passer. Before I got here, it was more he's a run stopper. He can't rush the passer. Now it's like I kind of do both.

Q. As someone who can rush the passer, do you maybe talk smack to Jamaree that he hasn't got a sack this year?

DERRICK HARMON: No, he talks smack to me a little bit here and there, but we know that without Jamaree on that D-line, we're nothing without that guy right there. We all play key pieces on that D-line. Everybody knows their role.

That's what we love about this team. Everybody knows their role. Nobody complains about their role. They're just doing it to help the team.

Q. You don't talk smack about who's getting sacks or anything?

DERRICK HARMON: Not really talking smack, but we joke around with it. Those guys, the older guys -- Burch, Key, JC, me, we hang around with each other outside of football. Of course we talk smack. That's what boys do.

Q. What's it like playing with (indiscernible) a guy who's that big, that quick, that strong?

DERRICK HARMON: You wouldn't believe he's like 290. He's a big guy. He's a unique human being, like he can stop the run, rush the passer.

Outside of that, he's just a great guy to be around, a great guy to talk to, chill with, fellowship with, so a great guy.

Q. Is he kind of like a gentle giant outside of the football field?

DERRICK HARMON: Yes, yes, yes.

Q. Do you have any stories about that?

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DERRICK HARMON: No, just you can tell when he's on the field versus when he's off the field. He's a friendly, laughable guy, trying to crack jokes all the time. Me and JC have a group chat and crack jokes all the time, saying little things here and there.

Q. You didn't have Jordan last time you played Ohio State. How do you feel about that? Is it better having him on the defensive line?

DERRICK HARMON: Absolutely. The games that Burch missed, of course we missed him. And you can see when he came in, he made plays. It hurt us not having him in the first game, so to have him this game means a lot.

Q. How much of the first game did you guys watch? Does it mean as much as you think it does or do you not put too much emphasis?

DERRICK HARMON: We watch tape every day, every hour. Of course we're going to watch tape. It's really what they're going to throw at us, just being ready. Whatever they throw at us, we've got to be dialed in.

Q. Obviously the run game is back and forth. How important is it to you as a defensive tackle to plug those holes and stop the run for you guys?

DERRICK HARMON: Very important.

Q. You received a lot of recognition for what you've done this year. Your fellow members got up on the stage this morning. Are there guys on the team who don't receive that recognition? If so, who and why?

DERRICK HARMON: I feel like a lot of guys on our team, definitely the defensive side deserve a lot. It's a handful of guys I could say right now, but I think you know the guys. I think that adds fuel to the fire to put certain guys' names up there.

Q. Who do you think that is?

DERRICK HARMON: I can't remember off the top of my head.

Q. Obviously the first time around you guys did a pretty good job stopping the run. What went into that?

DERRICK HARMON: Really just guys being dialed in. All 11 guys playing the same call. All 11 guys doing the same thing. That's what makes a good defense.

Q. Did you guys notice anything about Ohio State's

backs or any tendencies that will help you be better this time?

DERRICK HARMON: Not sure.

Q. This offensive line looks a lot different than the first time you went against them. Have you watched tape where they're rotating the guards? Just give me your impression how they look now by comparison.

DERRICK HARMON: They switched guys, guys got hurt. So the switch they made is looking good. They had a good run against Tennessee the last game and they dominated. I feel like to me that O-line is a good group up top.

Q. Have you ever played an offensive line that rotated like that?

DERRICK HARMON: I can't remember off the top of my head. I believe so, yes. It's football. You get deep in the season, guys get hurt, things happen, so of course.

Q. As you play an offensive line that does rotate, how challenging is that trying to go up against these guys? How do you counter that on the defense?

DERRICK HARMON: You don't. Me personally, I don't change nothing with the guy that's in front of me. Just playing my ball. He has to run. He has to adjust to my game. I don't have to adjust to his game.

Q. Have you noticed anything schematically different with Ohio State since the last time they played you guys?

DERRICK HARMON: No, sir.

Q. I just wanted to ask throughout the season Dan was come in with you've got the gladiator thing, the jump around all week, the baseball bat. On team meetings on Monday, have you ever been surprised at maybe what he's pitched?

DERRICK HARMON: Not surprised, but I know every Monday I'm kind of more like anticipating what the theme is going to be type thing. Not -- trying to guess what it's going to be type thing. That's what it is.

Q. I think the Wisconsin one really sticks out to me because obviously you were on the sideline when the offense was facing fourth and nine, but literally right after that, they convert the fourth and nine and you turn that fourth quarter around and win the game. What has it been like to have all those moments and all those things directly translate to success on the field?



DERRICK HARMON: I feel like it really shows. It shows to us how -- to the players how we can buy into what Coach Lanning is trying to give to us. Those little things that you can get a team to buy into a coach and his program, I feel like nobody can stop that team.

Q. Have you ever had a coach that's pulled out all of those movie references, made you jump around?

DERRICK HARMON: Yes and no, not to this extent. He takes it to the next level.

Q. I know the offensive line was facing a lot of outside noise those first two weeks, giving up sacks. You go against them every single day. What was it like those first two weeks seeing them kind of maybe dismiss that noise and keep working? They got that Joe Moore Award nomination.

DERRICK HARMON: I knew what O-line we had when I first got here to fall camp. Them boys was on my tail, you know what I'm saying? So I knew what O-line we had the first day of camp.

The first two games, things are going to happen. Guys are getting used to new guys and certain things. After those two games, those guys have been dominant, those five guys. I go up against those guys every day in practice, so I know what type of guys those guys are. Probably the best O-line in the country on this team.

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