

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Ryan Day Press Conference

Q. I've heard differing views on playing a team twice the same season, pros and cons. What are the pros and cons?

RYAN DAY: I don't think there's any cons, I think that they're a very good team, and we're in different places than we were in the middle of the season.

And the way things are nowadays, when you're into a playoff format, the best teams in the country are going to be in the playoffs. So I think you're going to see this more and more as we move forward.

Q. I know every bowl has its own feel. What's the Rose Bowl's feel to you?

RYAN DAY: First off, it has an unbelievable tradition, not just in general but for Ohio State. And the statue of Archie, the fact that we're playing a traditional Ohio State/Oregon, Big Ten/Pac-12 match-up, I think, is significant.

Anybody who's ever been to the Rose Bowl knows it's one of the best environments there is in college football. And for me being my third opportunity to coach in the Rose Bowl, I know how special it is, and I know these guys do as well. We've talked about it before.

And these guys want to play their best football. They understand what's at stake here. They want to fight to keep this team together, and obviously what's at the end of the road.

Q. I know you guys are a different team. How have you improved since the last time you played in Eugene?

RYAN DAY: Just different. Different. We certainly have taken a couple of injuries. So that's affected things, but we've adjusted in a lot of areas. We've grown. Every



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game you play in, you learn from, and whether you win the game, lose the game, you learn from each week.

And the team that learns and continues to adapt, make adjustments, address their issues, continue to enhance their strengths are the teams that are going to be the strongest in the end. And our focus has been on our execution and our preparation. And it has to continue to be that way.

And this is a different trip than the last couple times we've been at a Rose Bowl. This is not a, quote/unquote, bowl game, this is a playoff game. So it's not about events. It's not about anything other than coming in here, practicing and preparing to play our best at game time.

Q. When did you know that the team had been cleared that mental hurdle? That was a huge lift after that.

RYAN DAY: This team is resilient, they're resilient. It's a mature group. When you get around our players, it doesn't take too long for you to realize the type of guys that we have on this team. And there's a lot of pride there, a lot of resilience.

And I think our culture is as strong as it's ever been. And the type of young men -- most of them are men now in our program -- and they know when the season started that we would be in this situation. And so we've been preparing all along to be in this situation.

There were things that have come up this year that we didn't prepare for, for sure. Things that we did prepare for. But we knew there was going to be ups and downs along the way. And our foundation that we built in the offseason, during the season, during practice, August, September, as time went on, was going to get tested somewhere along the line.

And I gave our guys the analogy of some of those houses that go through storms, and the houses that have the strong foundations when the storm clears are still there.

Our team's still here. We're still fighting. And ultimately, we have an opportunity to go play a team that right now is

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ranked the No. 1 team in the country and an opportunity to win a national championship at the end of the road. That's what on you focus has been on.

I'm proud of our team and how they've responded to adversity this season, but we're certainly not done yet. And these guys right here are fighting to stick together for another week. You live to see another week. That's been the mentality of our guys.

And I feel like we're focused right now we have to continue to do that all the way up to game time. Even we're at a, quote/unquote, bowl site, this is not a bowl game; this is a playoff game. And our focus has to be on this game and our execution when the foot hits the ball.

Q. Is it fair to say Will, after the first meeting with Oregon, beat himself up for the way the game ended? You're here now, you're in the playoff, in the meat of the championship, but he's still talked about it, the second chance. Do you have to talk to him about that?

RYAN DAY: Every great competitor does that. You remember the ones that didn't go well and the ones that are good, you kind of move on from. That's what's expected of you. So I think anytime you come away from a game like that, you learn from it and you grow from it.

And great competitors, it kind of hangs in the back of their mind because they want to make sure they grow from it. He's an example of that. But he's not the only one on our team. And I think that's certainly helped in the preparation and the focus this week knowing we have an opportunity to go play Oregon again.

Q. You guys have a history of developing quarterbacks (inaudible). What's been the advantage of bringing a guy in like Will with the things he had, basically a one-year deal?

RYAN DAY: This has been a little different for us. Typically the quarterbacks that come into Ohio State, we take a lot of pride in being able to develop them over their time while they're here. And everybody who comes into the program goes on a different journey and a different path along the way. But it's something at all positions we take pride in, in developing all positions.

But quarterback is one particular that is close to me and something that I take a lot of pride in, even still as the head coach. So in this situation, with Will coming in, we saw that he was a winner. We saw he was a leader. We saw what he did at Kansas State, the success he had, and we felt like, with our surrounding cast and with our offense and the way we do things, that this would be a really good match

for him and for us.

And I think Will's been great for Ohio State, but I also think Ohio State has been great for Will. And I still don't think he's played his best game yet. I think he's excited to continue to show his best play here into the playoffs. And ultimately his leadership is what's going to help us win this game, and he knows that.

I'm proud of who he is as a person, his leadership to get to this point, and I'm excited to see him play here on Wednesday.

Q. This job's not for everybody, coaching at Ohio State is not for everybody. You experienced the highs and lows. What's the journey meant for you as a man, a husband, a father, all those things, what's it meant to you to be at Ohio State?

RYAN DAY: I go back to our players because that's, to me, that's what's the most important thing here and the team in general. It's not just one person; it's all of us together.

And when you have great moments, you've got to make sure you appreciate everybody that's doing all the hard work. And when things don't go well, we all have to take ownership of it. And that's part of the job. And I understand that.

And I take ultimate responsibility for everything that goes on in the program.

But I think for our guys to understand that life is about resilience. And you're ultimately defined by how you handle adversity in your life and that things are going to be difficult along the way, but how you respond is critically important. So that continues to this point.

And our guys have to continue to stay focused and disciplined now that we're into December, middle of December, past Christmas. And that's all part of the journey for them to understand, that the team who continue to stay focused and be disciplined and execute at a high level late in the season is the team that's going to win.

Here we are against a great opponent. We'll have to be at our best.

But I think along the way we learned about ourselves. It's a resilient group. It's a team that wants to stick together. And it's a team that wants to stay together. And so that's it. And I'm proud of where our guys are at right now and excited to see them play Wednesday.

Q. I asked Julian, I hate to look ahead but life is about to get loud for Julian. Whatever he's done, entrusted being (indiscernible) Ohio State. What have you seen from Julian he knows this is going to be what's going to happen whenever it happens?

RYAN DAY: The team has been the focus on this team and these guys, and that's one of the bigger challenges now is the way the structure is set up, with the portal, with signing day, you still have to look forward to next year and make sure you're planning accordingly.

For all of our guys, they're put in a tough spot, some of them, to decide where they want to be next year, how do they fit into the depth chart.

I think the majority of our guys understand the culture. They want to compete. I think that's why you come to Ohio State is to compete. You don't come for guarantees. You can go other places and probably play maybe a little bit more, get guaranteed a spot. This is about competing.

If you make it at Ohio State you can make it anywhere. That has to be everybody's mentality, including a quarterback.

Q. (Inaudible) what went well for you guys?

RYAN DAY: I would just say that we had great preparation going into the game, and we executed at a high level. Now what goes into that? We can list all the things that go into that, but that's what we have to do again this week.

I think that's the challenge late in the season is consistently, week after week, execute at a high level in all three phases. I'd love to tell you there's some magic formula that happens, but that's really what it comes down to when you talk about playoff football.

We have to be situationally aware in this game. We have to understand time/score/situation. I think it's important to make sure that our guys are continually locked in, even coming to a, quote/unquote, bowl site. It's not a bowl. It's a playoff game. This is a road game for us. There's no events. There's no anything other than getting ready to go play in this game. And that's got to be our focus so that ultimately we all can execute the way we need to and do our job.

Q. You have tape on Oregon, but do you feel Oregon has things you guys haven't seen or do you think that you've seen most of their identity?

RYAN DAY: I think when you're late in this season there's a combination of both. There's a lot of overage that you

have throughout the season that you have ready for teams, you have ready for the first game that you played against somebody, that you don't quite get to but you practiced all year.

There's also what you've been doing all season that you're counting on your guys to be able to go execute in a very stressful environment. Everything's on the table. So what the guys know well, they'll go back to the level of their training.

But there's also going to be change-ups along the way on both sides of the ball. So just like anytime of the year, you've got to adapt once you see something new.

Q. What's the biggest difference with Oregon, do you think, from the first time you played and what you're seeing now on tape and going into this game?

RYAN DAY: I think, first off, Gabriel is playing at a high level. He's now a full year into the system and you can see there's a comfort level there. I feel like they've certainly found their identity in all three phases and have done a nice job of implementing that and adapting as the season's gone on.

And then they've also been very good in special teams, faking punts, trying to find ways to steal possessions throughout the season. And so that's why I keep going back to the fact we've got to be on point in all those areas and understand how they're trying to attack us, because I think as the season has gone on, they've continued to do a good job of playing complementary football, also adding in the special teams part of it and try to challenge you in different ways and be creative in the way they attack you.

Q. What about you guys specifically, how have you changed since that first meeting?

RYAN DAY: I think every week our scheme in all three phases has been tweaked a little bit, not only to maximize our players' strengths, but also to not exactly do what we've shown on film and be predictable.

I also think that the number of snaps that we've played this year has been down, and that was to make sure that this time of year we were fresh, and that came into the style of play, sometimes when we've played depth.

And I feel like we do have a team right now that is fresh, that is ready to go play their best football at the end of the season. So I think all those things come into play when you're talking about scheme and when you're talking about the physical part of it.

Q. How different is this season compared to last season, where last season is basically a sprint, (indiscernible) get to the final two games. Now you've got 14, 15, 16 games. Early in the year, did that kind of dictate what you were doing knowing, hey, we've got a lot of stuff at the back end also?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, and I think if you start to plan too far ahead you lose focus on what's in front of you. It's a series of mini sprints along the way. You can't just say it's a marathon because you've got to win the sprint here and now or else you'll not get to the point to where we are at this point -- knowing along the way there's twists and turns, and certainly we know that more than anybody.

I think, as the season's gone on, I think what we've put in place has fit to where we are -- depth, pace of play on offense, the way that we've continued to grow in our scheme in all three phases, knowing that in this time of year you have to be pulling out some of your best stuff. So, I think again all those things come into play.

You also have to make adjustments along the way to some injuries. And I think that has come into play as well. But when you find -- when guys who are second string, third string have to step up and play, the more they get thrust in those roles the more they fit into those roles as well.

And whether it's for the first time, that's one thing. But you see Donovan Jackson now move to left tackle, it's not the topic of conversation right now because he's made that transition and is executing much better than he would for the first week or two when he hadn't played that position before.

Q. Do you think there's a big advantage that they've had to buy or have you had enough time off from the Tennessee game where you think you guys are fine as far as rest and all that? Or is there an advantage to having that off week or that first-round bye?

RYAN DAY: I think there's a lot of different ways to look at it. I think it comes down to who executes and plays better. I grew up watching a lot of college football and I also watched a lot of NFL football, and I saw a lot of wild card teams use that first win to build momentum and stay in routine as they went into the next round. And that's kind of been the way we've looked at it.

Q. What's the advantage to having Chip on staff with that NFL background, kind of knowing, the scheduling and everything and kind of the pace and rhythm that's now the CFP?

RYAN DAY: We have a lot of guys on our staff with a lot of

diverse backgrounds. Tim Walton's has coached in the NFL for over 12 years. James Laurinaitis played in the NFL for a long time. Brian Hartline played in the NFL. Chip was a head coach in the NFL. I know I'm forgetting a few others.

But when you look at our staff there's a lot of diversity there. So I think it all comes into play when you're talking about this late in the season because it's about ball. That's what it is. It's about football this time of year. And so the team that has the best plan and can execute it is going to win the game.

Q. What's the point last year when you thought getting Chip on staff was realistic?

RYAN DAY: It came up in conversation, and then when -- it wasn't right for him at the time based on the situation at UCLA. And then when Bill took the job at Boston College, I checked back in to see if it was real. At that point it was much more realistic, and we made it happen.

So it was always conversation about us coaching together again. Where and how, we didn't know, but we're back together.

Q. When you became the head coach here and you're trying to develop your style of coaching, your identity, what do you want people to note of you as a head coach? What's that process like, trying to develop your identity as a head coach?

RYAN DAY: I think that's part of the process that, to me, was never that important. I think at the end of the day, it's easy for people to want to categorize you or put you in a box or say you're the next "this" coach or you're this person.

At the end of the day, the advice that I was told was be yourself. And that's it. And that's what I've tried to do and focus on our players, focus on our coaches and focus on our fans.

We have some of the best fans in the world. And we work hard, and I work hard to make sure we're doing everything we possibly can to make them proud. And some days are better than others. But being resilient and being strong through adversity is a big part of who the Buckeyes are, just in general -- the state of Ohio, our program, our athletic department, our university.

And, so, that's something that I've talked to our team for a long time about -- the lessons that come with this game, just because it's become as big as it is, but it's still a game. And there's still a lot of life lessons that can be learned.

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And I'm proud of our men. I'm proud of the resilience that they've shown, but we've got a lot of football ahead of us. So there will be time to be focused on those things down the road. Right now it's all about Rose Bowl, all about beating Oregon.

Q. I know it's hard, as you said, to look at the big picture when you're in it right now, but this is your third Rose Bowl and they seem to have come for you at pretty pivotal moments. First one, it's the last game before you're the head coach, the last one -- a lot of these guys were freshmen and sophomores. I know that year didn't go the way you wanted but it's almost like a jumping-off point for what this has become now. Is there a way you look at the third time around with this first batch of players you've had here who are now older, trying to still go accomplish at least one of the three goals you have?

RYAN DAY: I think every year and every game, you've got to treat it like it's a big game. It's just the way it goes here. If you don't think it's a big game at Ohio State, I've always said, try losing it.

So the approach has to be consistent over time. And if you trust your process and you continue to build on the things that are going well and your strengths. If you can build or fix the issues, even though a loss certainly can expose them more than a win; we always know the issues are there.

But then as the season goes on, how can you continue to grow and build from those with the goal of playing your best football this time of year? And that's it. And you're counting on that foundation and that process over time resulting in a victory right here late in the season.

That's really been what the focus has been on. It will continue to be. But I will say the Rose Bowl is a great venue. And our guys know that. And they're excited to play in this game.

Q. Does it feel like more of a (inaudible) this year with the expansion, just the preparation?

RYAN DAY: The turnaround on these games have been quicker. But I like it. It keeps us in a routine. And I feel like our guys have good energy. They've been focused. They know that the discipline of staying locked in and not being distracted and being able to do the routine things routinely this time of year -- fundamentals, technique, doing a great job in walk-throughs, doing a great job in your meetings -- all those things are going to add up this late in the season.

And typically when you watch a game in the playoffs, you can go back and you say, man, it wasn't anything extraordinary that happened; we were just really, really good at XYZ in this game. And taking care of the football, as we know, is going to be big. I think the discipline of outlasting your opponent is a big thing.

Q. Do you have (indiscernible) to prepare for, (indiscernible) players for the NFL?

RYAN DAY: I do. I do. This is definitely a longer season. And I think making sure our guys understand how they have to take care of their body, their minds and their spirit of getting themselves to go play at a high, high level on Saturday. Yeah, it's different than it is in high school. And now, it's become different in college.

But there's a lot of carry over to the NFL, I believe that, just the way the style that the season is being played out.

Q. Having played Oregon already, does it help to have tape on them, or is it kind of just another game?

RYAN DAY: It's the same for both teams. I've said this before, I think we're both in different places, but there's certainly a reference point there where both teams are at. And there's going to be things that will be similar and things that will be different.

Q. Looking back at when you first took the job at Ohio State, what would you tell yourself from the time you took the job?

RYAN DAY: How much time do we have? I would say it really goes down to the process. And you can make the moment too big. You can think that one speech can get the guys fired up.

But ultimately it comes down to, on a daily basis, being consistent, making sure you have the right people in the right seats, and then constantly just staying on it and trying to be disciplined enough to outlast your opponents and trust the process on a daily basis. And focus more on that than the result, because ultimately it comes down to execution and making sure we put the right guys in the right spot.

Q. There's a unique coach-player relationship. I talked to Trevor (phonetic). He laughed when I said it, but he said I'm proud of Coach. He thought it was funny because he's that younger guy. But thinking of that relationship you have with those guys, (indiscernible) freshman. Early on you had all four years. And even Emeka was saying that the players have, coaches had

those moments but having the ability to have the open dialogue?

RYAN DAY: It's all about these guys and these players, always has been. They deserve all the credit. And when something doesn't go well, it's my responsibility. And I understand that.

I lean on these guys because they're mature men. When you get around and talk to them, you realize they have a lot of input that's really valuable. And the easy thing to do is to just say, no, this is how we do it.

But the feedback you get back from a guy like Emeka or Jack Sawyer or Cody Simon or Lathan Ransom -- these guys, they know what they're talking about. And they love their teammates and they want to fight to keep this team together.

But I think that there's a lot of lessons that have been learned throughout their career -- I'm talking about the seniors -- and certainly a lot of lessons this season that they are going to take with them for the rest of their lives.

But now's not the time to be focused on that. We're talking about the Rose Bowl. We're talking about beating Oregon.

Q. You guys obviously played with an edge against Tennessee. What's the challenge philosophically for a coach to keep that sharp and keep going?

RYAN DAY: I mean, if you believe in our guys, believe in our men, you know they're going to play that way in this game. They know what's at stake. Again, this is a group that's been through a lot. They have. And they know what's at stake here.

We've wanted to get into this position all season. You don't know what twists and turns are going to come, but here we are with another opportunity to play Oregon -- not that that's all that significant, other than every team that's in the quarterfinals right now is three games away from hoisting a trophy. That's what it is.

The only way to get to that point is to be focused and executing in this game. I wish I could tell you there's a magic recipe or formula to do that, but it's how well do we prepare.

When we get done with this, we're going to have great meetings, great walk-throughs, great practice so that we can execute really well, because execution fuels emotion.

I thought we executed well in that game. We started out with emotion. But once you saw he us executing, he hit a

long one to TreVeyon and you start to see the sideline continue to build that emotion. And I think that will be important in this game as well.

Q. You mentioned twist and turns. Your O line has had 23 different combinations. Walk me through (indiscernible) the challenges and injuries have presented there and how you have to handle it?

RYAN DAY: I think moving forward, we just know that we have to make sure we have a lot of depth at that position because you can't just pull somebody in off the street. But I will give Justin credit for the fact that he has had a lot of combinations in there and he's continued to work with these guys. And I think we've had a good week of practice.

We have a big challenge against this front. They do a very good job. They're strong and powerful up front. Stay on the move. Kind of feel like they're moving and twisting and shaking, blitzing on every snap. We have to adjust to that.

But, yeah, I just think as we move forward we have to make sure we have a lot of depth because as you get to this late in the season in the NFL you can sign somebody off of waivers. You can't do that here. And the line is certainly one of those that you have to make sure you have a lot of numbers on.

Q. Talked a lot about player safety points. Is maybe one of the advantages, (indiscernible) if you know the guy across from you? Is that maybe the biggest takeaway? You know what I mean? You know his speed and tendency?

RYAN DAY: I would say that's probably exactly right. I think when I say a reference point, you know what you're up against because you've done it before. You've played against that person before.

Sometimes when you're going into a game there's a little bit of an unknown. Even last week, when you looked at, we're playing Tennessee, okay, how does this match-up in the SEC because we don't have a lot of like opponents? Here we played them before, so we know what we're getting.

Q. Do you feel you get a do-over in a sense? I know it doesn't matter if it's Oregon or whoever, but in a sense you do, do you feel fortunate as a coach and a program to get a second shot at it?

RYAN DAY: I mean, we're very excited about playing in this game. And we know that when we get to this point we've been playing against a lot of good opponents. But to say that our guys aren't excited about getting another shot

at Oregon, yeah, that wouldn't be accurate; we're excited about that.

Anytime you come up short like we did, it stings for a while. And you want an opportunity to go win that game. So that's what our focus is.

Q. Talk about riding this wave of momentum. How do you have it continue going forward?

RYAN DAY: I feel like playing in the first round allows us to stay in a routine. But ultimately nothing about the game last week or the game two weeks ago really has much to do with this game right here. This is its own game. And how we execute, how we play in this game will be ultimately how the game finishes.

So while we'll use those games as, again, reference points or opportunity to learn from those, we'll do that. But we know that this game is its own individual game that we're going to have to play really well in and take care of the football and execute at a high level.

Q. Talk about, as far as preparation, what excites you the most and what concerns you the most in preparation for this game?

RYAN DAY: They have very good players. They have very good coaches. Their quarterback is one of the best in the entire country. I think he's very experienced. Gets the ball out of his hand. He's athletic.

They have weapons on the outside. Running backs running hard, tight end's a good player.

They have a lot of weapons and do a good job of stressing you out with formations and different tempos.

I think on defense, the same thing, very, very talented front. Linebackers are very good. Back end is talented. When you look across the board, you're looking at some of the best players in the country, and they're very well coached. We know we have to be at our best in this game.

Q. How have you grown personally as a coach?

RYAN DAY: I think every year, every game you learn, you grow, you build and you lean on your players. You lean on your staff. You make sure you have the right guys there and you just pour it into them.

Q. You look back at fall camp when the O line was (indiscernible), and everything that's gone on between then and now, how much have you had to learn or grow in terms of going through that adversity

(inaudible)? How much has that impacted you, Chip, Justin?

RYAN DAY: It's impacted the entire offense. But that's why we say it's about the power of the unit, not just an individual player. And certainly the offensive line is the epitome of that.

And we had to make sure that we've had depth at that position and we've had to adapt to things we've done along the way.

But again the more those guys stepped into those roles, the more they grow into the roles, if that makes sense. Sometimes when you're like, oh, man, I don't know if he's going to be able to block anybody. Then he gets in there and finds his rhythm and knows he's going to be held accountable to play at a certain level, and I think you're seeing that with some of those guys.

Q. The final drive against Penn State, I know it's not the same line anymore, but for that whole group, hey, guys, we can go do this no matter who is in there and what guys are around?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, and I think quite honestly Seth helped with that, and they've continued to build off of that. It wasn't just the mentality as it was understanding how important technique is and just little details of how they're preparing in the game and the communication.

But there's also a mindset there. And, like you said, we've shown to play with that this season.

Q. Not a lot of players in the country who would say, I'm a first-round pick at my position and moves to another position in the middle of the season. What's that say about Donovan, the rest of the group?

RYAN DAY: I can't say enough about his unselfishness but I think it's going to pay off for him big time because I think he's become a very good tackle. And now I think he's shown that he can play in the NFL at both positions, which is only increasing his value.

But what a great example to all the young players of somebody who took a situation where he came back to be an All-American guard and be the first guard taken in the draft and then midway through the season has to move to tackle, embraces it. But you're seeing him play his best football.

Q. Nothing correlates stronger with you guys than the losses over the years. The running back (indiscernible) happens. Against these guys, how is



he in this match-up and having more success offensively but also having success defensively?

RYAN DAY: I've said it before, how important that is. And there's a lot of situations that will play into this game -- certainly the turnovers, explosive plays, winning first down, third down, red zone -- all those things will come into play.

But as we all know, rushing yards are critically important to controlling the game. We'll always look to strike a balance. But you've got to be able to run the football and stop the run.

Q. That's such a big factor. What has Carlos Locklyn meant given the history there, what his role can be in a game?

RYAN DAY: Well, he's very proud and pushes his players very, very hard. He's a tough guy, and takes pride in the fact that his guys play with a mentality and a physicality and a toughness.

He does know that program very well. And I know he wants to win this game in a big way.

Q. How do you prepare the corners mentally? Denzel had a tough go the first time against these guys. And Davison had the incident. (Indiscernible) had the incident. How do you prepare them mentally with some of the things that happened?

RYAN DAY: I think they've had a great week and a half of preparation here. They're excited. They go against some of the best receivers in the world here at Ohio State every day in practice. So I know they're excited to get back on the field and compete against those guys.

Q. In the days we're in, the portal in particular, is the APR arcane? Does that have to be checked in a sense, with the transfer part of it, how can anybody feel -- everybody's going to be in violation (indiscernible)?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think that's a great conversation for after the season. But I also think the way we look at things are very, very different.

But I do think your team GPA and those things should all still be something that is talked about because a lot of these guys are going to go on to the NFL, but a lot of these guys are going to go on to be businessmen and leaders in society and in their communities.

So, getting their degrees is still going to be as important as anything. We can't lose that in this whole process.

So I do think the APR is going to be hard to track as the transfers continue to happen from school to school, though.

Q. Are you anticipating a different game than the first one?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think every game is different, and you don't know until you get into the game what that's going to be. Usually that's what the first half is all about. Then you get into halftime and you kind of come up for air. You figure out -- we've been in games where the first half has been kind of chaotic and hectic, but ultimately at halftime you're either going to be winning, losing or tying, but you use that first half as a barometer of what kind of game you're in, try to make the best adjustments you can to the second half.

Q. Great start against Tennessee. It's going to be a challenge to replicate that. Obviously that's the ideal way to start every game.

RYAN DAY: But at halftime we were only up by 11 points. As much as you felt early in the game we had momentum, a huge part of that game was the second half.

We got that three-and-out and ran back down and scored. So you have to continue to play for four quarters. Certainly you could set the tone for the game early in the game. We want to make sure we do that. But we have to continue to play for four quarters because we know that they're explosive on offense. So this is going to go four quarters.

Q. Luke Montgomery stepping up in a huge role in a huge game how much confident do you have in him?

RYAN DAY: How do you build confidence, you build confidence by actually doing it on the field. I think that's what it comes down to. Every day is an opportunity to prove to your coaches and teammates that you can do your job. That's how you build confidence. There's real confidence and fake confidence. Fake confidence is jumping up and down before the game, talking trash. That has nothing to do with what have you done up to that point to prepare to execute in that moment. He's continued to do that in practice. So you're seeing it now in the game.

Q. You mentioned earlier, for a great competitor, the games you don't win stick in the back of your mind. As a coach, does that have that same effect, especially when it comes to a big game and you don't come out on top?

RYAN DAY: It fuels your fire, for sure. I think any great competitor would say that. It just fuels your fire. We're

focused on the next game and what's going on right here in the Rose Bowl. That's it. But you certainly use the positives as an opportunity to build your confidence but use your setbacks as an opportunity to fuel your emotion and fuel your drive and then obviously learn from them.

Q. How do you handle that as a coach, not letting that creep in and take over, I guess?

RYAN DAY: It's a mindset. But you lean on your players. You lean on the staff that's around you and you stay strong and you understand that this is a process, and you keep your eyes on the prize at the end of the season.

Q. What have you seen from Emeka this season, especially from a leadership standpoint?

RYAN DAY: Emeka is a tremendous leader. He's a tremendous young man. He's very thoughtful. I'm sure anybody who has interviewed him walks away extremely impressed with who he is.

Emeka is going to have a great career in the NFL. He's had a great career at Ohio State. But Emeka can do pretty much whatever he wants to do. Another guy who does everything right. We have several guys in the program who are just like that.

I can't say enough about who he is as a person but also as a player. I know he's excited to get back on the field, play against these guys here.

Q. What has Maurice provided to you guys, been around the team as much as he has every week, even coming out for a trip like this?

RYAN DAY: We love having former players around because these guys understand what it means to wear a Buckeye uniform. And so it's good to have some guys who have been through that before in the program.

And I appreciate how he's been around the program this year and some of the messaging he's provided to our players and maybe even in some tough spots, in adverse moments, he's been strong in there and he's been great to be around our guys. He's got a certain mindset and toughness about him of somebody who has overcome a lot of adversity in his life and is stronger because of it.

I think he's great to have around the team and has been this season.

Q. You reached out to him, I guess, in the spring. Why was that something you wanted to do?

RYAN DAY: I had heard about some of the work that he had done at UConn basketball and said, you know, it's probably time for me to reach out and have a conversation and the conversation was as impressive a conversation I've had in a while about his mindset.

And it continued to grow from there. We started to bring him around practice, and you've seen him at games. He's here with us this weekend. It's great to have him around and around our guys and again can't say enough about somebody who has been in some adverse situations in his life but have overcome them and made them positive. I think our guys have a lot of respect for that, and so do I.

Q. (Question about Jeremiah) What can you say about his versatility and how you can move him around more?

RYAN DAY: I think wherever he is, he's going to garner some attention, and then that has an effect on the entire play and the entire game.

So I think it's easy when you just put him in at one position to know where he is and then game plan around that. I think when you can move him around, that certainly helps. But ultimately it comes down to the execution of the plays. There's no magical things that are going to happen. We have to execute the plays.

I do think mixing him in terms of his alignments at least makes the defense work a little more the.

Q. (Question about him having the ball in his hands and being underrated.)

RYAN DAY: I think the thing that's hard to replicate is his size and speed. There's a lot of things about him that are special. But I say all the time, you can't replicate how big and strong he is and then how fast he is when he's running. I think you've seen that on some of the things that you're talking about.

But, again, when you're talking about him in terms of his ability to sustain throughout a season for a young player has been significant.

Q. On the other side of the ball, seems like Jordan Hancock has played a little bit more deep safety here and there. How has his ability (inaudible)?

RYAN DAY: In the three safety system Jim has incorporated, I think Tim Walton and Matt have done a great job this season in having versatility in disguising looks, and so the number one thing you've got to do is you've to get lined up against this offense. They do a great

job of changing up tempo. So we've got to get aligned.

But I think when you have three safeties, you have the ability to mix up the looks. And when you're talking about Lathan, Caleb and Jordan, they're similar in what they can do and that allows our defensive guys to do different things to disguise different coverages.

Q. (Inaudible) it's not that you're fast all the time or you play slow all the time, the drive, you might be both, how difficult is that to prepare for?

RYAN DAY: It is. And I think when you're playing at one speed all the time, the defense gets into a rhythm. And I think what Oregon has done a nice job of is change those tempos. I think you see us do that as well.

What do you do? You just try to make them uncomfortable on the other side of the ball. I think they've done that as good as anybody this year. That, the change up of tempo and change up formations creates the most challenge for our defense. We've got to do a great job pre-snap.

Q. When you first saw (indiscernible) on tape, when you first saw him on tape, has he been what you thought and then some?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, and then some. We always knew he was special, but what I didn't appreciate at least until he got here was the maturity -- physical maturity and then the mental maturity.

Practices really hard every day. We have to pull him back sometimes. But then again, physically how mature he is for a young player. You see a lot of freshmen come in, they don't look like that. You add that up on top of the other skill set that he has, I think that's what makes him special as a freshman.

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