

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes Donovan Jackson

Press Conference



**PLAYOFF
QUARTERFINAL**



Q. How's the week been so far?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Week has been fun. The flight was great. Hotel is amazing. So we're just hanging out right now.

Q. What does it feel like now compared to when you guys came here in '22?

DONOVAN JACKSON: When I came here in '22 I was just a freshman, so just taking in the experience. I mean, I wasn't really playing so I just kind of like enjoyed California as it is.

But now coming here as a playoff game, you know, it's a different level of urgency. When we came here our freshmen year it was the bowl game so here for the week. Now we're here it's just a business trip.

A lot of the bowl festivities are dimmed down and now it's just playing ball and getting to the next round.

Q. When you're there as a freshmen and you get to take it all in, does that help you now in your senior year to make sure the moment really isn't too big?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, I would say that helps, being in the same environment I was before. Same hotel, I believe on the same floor at the hotel as well.

It's kind of like, all right, I've seen everything. Now let's play ball.

Q. What's the roommate scenario for the hotel?

DONOVAN JACKSON: I stay with Tegra Tshabola. He's been my roommate on every away trip. Yeah, pretty cool. We get along pretty well.

Q. What's your relationship been like with Tegra?

DONOVAN JACKSON: It's been good. Besides the fact that he uses all the towels. Other than that, it's been pretty good.

Q. What have you seen from him throughout this year as he's developed?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I feel like every game he's progressed in different ways. You know, obviously coming in as a first time starter, you know, it's never an easy job. Especially at guard.

But I feel like he's handled it in the past way. He's improved as much as we would like him to do and just been getting better every week.

Q. For you now that you're going to face the Oregon front the first time at left tackle, what have you seen from them? How do you think you're going to try and attack at your position, which you started the second half of the season?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, the first time we played Oregon I was at left guard and now I'm at left tackle. Different guys you're going against; different body types; different rushers.

I just got to execute what we have done throughout the past, what was it, ten days that we've known that we're going to play this team. Yeah, they're a very talented front. They're going to give you a bunch of different looks and fronts and they shift, move, slant. You just got to be on your toes.

Q. How do you approach a three-man front compared to a four-man front?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, three-man front poses different challenges but that all relies on the communication of O-line. Make sure we're on the same page to make sure we execute at a high level.

Q. (Regarding recruiting advice.)

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DONOVAN JACKSON: Recruiting advice? I would just say know where you fit in. I would say sometimes guys get blinded by flashing lights and all coaches are going to say you're the greatest thing ever. All coaches are going to say you're going to make the NFL. You got to find where you fit in academically and athletically.

Not everyone fits in the same place. I think that's why a lot of the guys are transferring around. They get blinded by what's in front of them. I chose Ohio State state I felt at home for the first time in my visits. I've loved it since.

You just got to find what you love.

Q. Any funny recruiting stories from back in the day? Been a minute, huh?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, been a minute. Funny recruiting stories. I always like to reference when I committed to Ohio State I did it abruptly. Visited in 2019 when they played Penn State and I told my dad then, I'm committing to Ohio State. Obviously I was a kid from Texas.

I told my dad and he was like, all right, let's sleep on it. If you wake up feeling the same way you can tell Coach Day. I went to his office and I remember him asking me, hey, what are your plans for recruiting coming up? I was like, actually Coach Day, I'm committing to Ohio State. He was like, no, started freaking out, so that was pretty fun.

Q. If you were stranded on an island, what teammate would you not want to be with?

DONOVAN JACKSON: I would not want to be with Zen Michalski. He's been my roommate for three years so I know a little bit too much about Zen. I rather not be stranded on an island with him.

Q. Tell me like how do you guys make it here? What went into making it to the college football finals?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, a lot of hard work. We went through a lot of ups and downs this season. We won big games; lost games we thought we shouldn't.

At the end of the day we got to the end destination which is the College Football Playoffs.

We understand it's going to be a fight. Every round is a fight. The first round was, now it is going to be even bigger this round going against a great opponent in Oregon. We just got to execute what's called and hopefully we can come out with the win.

Q. What improvements are you seeing within yourself since then?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, improvement I've seen in myself, I had to kick out and play a whole different position than previously. So being comfortable in what I've been doing with that. But just playing with strength and playing with length in my arms and just believing in what I do in practice I can put it on the field in games.

Q. How many years you've been with Ohio?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Four years.

Q. What does it mean to you having been there this long, being able to...

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, you know, this program has a history of winning and it's always a goal if you're in Ohio State to be a part of one of those winning programs.

So just trying to execute as best we can on the field so hopefully we can have one of our banners hanging in the facility.

Q. Talk to me about the tradition of Buckeye stickers on your helmet. In your words, explain that to me. How many do you have and what did it take to get them?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, so I haven't counted this year's, but in the past I believe my sophomore year I had 87. I counted. I made sure. But the history of the stickers is just like if you make a play or if you contribute to a great play, you get a sticker.

The stickering system has never been explained to me. I know if I play really hard I get more stickers than I do if I don't. It's a huge tradition, one of the greatest helmets in sports. When you see the half helmet or full helmet I believe that's the coolest helmet.

Q. How do you feel like Ohio State helped develop you as a leader?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I believe Ohio State helps. Obviously develops great football players and also great young men because of just the environment we're in. It's a very competitive place. The best people come from all across the country. I came from Texas, but JT came from Washington. Cody from Jersey. A lot of guys from Indiana, other Midwest states.

It's just kind of a place where the best gather and we try to



compete to be able to have the honor to be on the field for the scarlet and gray.

But all the off-season programs, everything like that, the community support and the way Columbus supports you makes you into a great young man as well as a football player.

Q. How was that transition for you going from Texas to Ohio?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, I thought it would be more of a culture shock because I'm from Houston, but the only thing different I would say is just there is not a lot of traffic. The environment is kind of the same. Obviously the food is different. A lot more Southern Creole cooking in Houston that I miss. Other than that, I love Columbus.

Q. How do you feel like Ohio has developed you as a student as well as athlete?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, feel like it developed me as student. Majority of the women in my family are teachers and professors, so academics comes first in my family. If I wasn't making good grades my mom would've flew to Columbus and snatched me up right there. Academics is a huge thing for me.

Being able to be a student as well as an athlete is very important.

Q. What's your major?

DONOVAN JACKSON: I major in sports industry, uh-huh.

Q. What is your favorite class?

DONOVAN JACKSON: I had a favorite class. It was an English course because I like writing and reading. I forgot the name. But I know the professor was Professor Samad and he was a great teacher. So I really enjoyed going to his class.

Q. What has been a memorable moment for you playing for Ohio State?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Just being able to be around all the guys who share a love the football. You know, I can say the games, ups and downs and everything like that, really just the off-season programs, the weight room and the memories we share and everything like that.

Q. Donovan, offense tackles and cornerbacks, two positions on the offense the whole time by themselves. What kind of mental toughness does it take in one of

those positions to be by yourself and know the guy is across from you is a premier talent and sometimes goes your way, sometimes doesn't?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I've had this discussion with some of our DBs, that tackle and cornerback, you're backing up while the other person is going forward and you have to be able to react. In the lineman's case you have to be able to stop their momentum and DBs case you have to be able to break on the ball.

Just being able to operate in space and being an athlete is kind of the main thing of those two positions.

Q. What are some of the things you guys work on to work on mental toughness and resiliency to help you bounce back from moments that don't go your way and make sure it doesn't become a habit?

DONOVAN JACKSON: You have to have a short-term memory. If you have one bad play you can't linger on that and make the next play another bad play. Especially this game. They're great players. They're going to make their plays. You got to be able to our block that off and get to the next play to try to execute the next play.

Q. ... regarding playing tackle.

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, it's very different. At guard there is a finite amount of space that the defender can work in. At tackle he has all the room in the world to go to work on you. We say set to the spot. The spot is where the rush starts.

So you got to be able to set the spot and be able to use your hands, move your feet, and keep your head out of the block to be able to execute the block.

Q. First time doing that, talking about setting to the spot, is that kind of like a mental hurdle to get over against that kind of athleticism? He got you a few times. What was that like going against that for the first time?

DONOVAN JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, that was my first time playing tackle, so kind of learning as I went. That whole week was my first time like getting in the tackle stance.

So, yeah, he got some on me. I just had to trust in what I learned that week and every week since then. I've gotten progressively more comfortable in what I'm doing. It's just getting more comfortable and getting in my stance and getting into a more comfortable stance and get to the spot.

