

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Monday, December 30, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jack Sawyer

Press Conference

Q. What's it like preparing for a team a second time?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, we're just excited for the challenge to go up against a great opponent again. It was a great game the first time, and they're a well-coached team, great team, great athletes. It's exciting, especially for being at the Rose Bowl here in California and the second round of the playoffs.

Q. Did you have a feeling that you would see them again?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that we all knew it was a great possibility. We knew they were going to take care of business, and we knew we were going to win out and get in the playoffs, as well. We knew that it was definitely a possibility, and what better way than to have a rematch here in California at the Rose Bowl.

Q. What do you think you guys as a defensive line did well in that game and what you have to do better?

JACK SAWYER: I just think we've got to keep preparing, keep getting ready. They've got a great offensive line, great quarterback, good running backs. When you're going against a great team like them, everything matters, every little thing. It's been fun, and we're just looking forward to playing a great team.

Q. How would you describe the difference or what have you seen from Will Howard this year?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, Will Howard is a super confident guy, great athlete, really smart guy and just a good guy to be around, too. Everybody in the locker room loves him. He exudes that confidence that you want to see at the quarterback position. Will has been great. He's been nothing short of great for this team. His game has been going to the next level every week.



**PLAYOFF
QUARTERFINAL**



Q. The amount of experience he brought with him, is that helpful in the opportunity day and age?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that you see across the country a lot of the veteran quarterbacks are playing really well here this year and even in years past. I think his level of having played and started in big time games definitely helps. I know that helps with his confidence. Like I said, he's a confident guy, and I think him playing a lot of football has a lot to do with that.

Q. The challenge of going against Gabriel, you guys saw him up close the first time, and it seems like many times guys could get a hand on him but not get him to the ground. What does he pose to you guys?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, he's a great player. He's played a lot of football and really good with the football, makes good decisions. I think he's a better athlete than a lot of people give him credit for, too. He can take off and run with his legs. He poses a great threat, and we love playing against great players like he is, so we're excited to go up against him for a second time this year.

Q. This is an entirely new frontier. You're playing a Big Ten team in the Rose Bowl.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, it's really the NFL playoffs now. You know what I mean? We've got Oregon at the Rose Bowl. It's a great historic bowl and happens to be the second round of the playoffs. We're really excited for this. I know they are, as well. It's going to be a great game.

Q. Last night when you got off the bus, I think I saw you bless yourself and point to the sky. What was the thinking there?

JACK SAWYER: I was just thanking God for the opportunity to be here. This is such a blessing to be here with this team and this group of guys. We were fighting like hell to get an opportunity for that. Just kind of giving God a thank you when we stepped off the bus.

We're blessed to be here, and make sure we give him

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

thanks.

Q. Will Howard has talked a lot about second chances for him after the way the first game ended, but it occurs to me there's been a lot of second chances for you guys as a team, Michigan, where you are now. Have you given that any thought?

JACK SAWYER: You know, to be honest with you, we're just so focused on where we're at now. I think when you look at how the season is now, for a lot of teams, s--- happens during the season, and we're here in the playoffs now. We're playing a great opponent, the No. 1 seed Oregon. All of our focus is geared towards them.

We know they've got a hell of a team and a great coaching staff. We know we've got to take care of business to go out there and put the best product on the field against them because we know they are.

Q. The fact you played them so close on the road, you know you can play with them. How much does that play into getting ready for this?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, you know, I think that we just learn. We learn from the mistakes we made in the previous game as well as every game prior. The Tennessee game, we had some mistakes in that we could have cleaned up. I think it's just taking it day by day and cleaning up the mistakes and trying to prepare yourself the most you can before the ball kicks off on Wednesday.

Q. The two losses, no sacks for the defense. How do you go about rectifying that this time around?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that we just clean up the issues that are there, and we all obviously are trying to find ways to affect the quarterback, like always. We have trust in Coach Knowles and those guys that they're going to put us in great positions to do that.

We're playing great team defense offensively, so we know what the challenge is at hand, and we're playing against a great team, great quarterback who is really good in the pocket, escaping stuff. We're just ready and trying to get prepared every day for that.

Q. Do you think people sleep on Jim Knowles as a DC?

JACK SAWYER: I don't know. If they are, they probably shouldn't. I think he's the best if not one of the best guys in the country at coaching the defense. He's a very smart guy, fun guy to be around. He talks a lot more to us than he does you guys.

If people think he's underrated, I'm blown away by that because I think he's proven himself time and time again, whether it's here or at other schools, that he's one of the best defensive coordinators in the country.

Q. How many cups of coffee do you think he drinks a day?

JACK SAWYER: We always laugh because I drink a lot of coffee, too. Whenever I'm getting a cup of coffee, he's in there getting one, too, and I just joke with him. He probably drinks about four cups a day, I think.

Q. What's going through your mind when you first arrived in Pasadena, and what's going to go through your mind when you step on to that grass come Monday?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, it's exciting. It's such a historic bowl and historic spot, field. We just thank God for the opportunity to be out here and be with each other and have this opportunity to go prepare and play a great team in Oregon at the Rose Bowl.

Q. How bad do you want to get them back after what happened in Eugene? How motivated are you for this game and to move on in this college football playoffs?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, we're just excited for this opportunity. We know what's at stake and obviously they do, as well. We're just trying to prepare and be as ready as we can be for the game come Wednesday, block out all the noise from before and even another loss that we had. We're just all focused and geared towards this game coming up.

Q. You're a long way from Pickerington. What's this journey been like?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, it's a long way. It's been awesome, though. It's fun. I'm here with all my brothers and coaching staff. We're fighting for another opportunity to wear this jersey again.

It's been awesome, and we're really excited. I know that Ohio State fans are going to travel well, so expect to see a lot of them in the stadium come Wednesday, and we're really excited.

Q. Is there an advantage to having played these guys before or a disadvantage?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think when you look at us, we're a lot different and they are, too. Like I said, they've got

great coaches, great players, and they're going to keep adapting, as well.

I don't really think the game beforehand really has much say in this game right now because like I say, they've gotten a lot better. I think we've gotten better a lot, too.

It's really just going to be a good game. We're excited for the opportunity. We're just going to prepare ourselves as much as we can for Wednesday.

Q. Last week you guys (indiscernible) in the country now you're facing the other team at the top. How do you bounce back to show the country that you guys are capable of winning a National Championship?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that we took a tough loss. We got punched in the mouth. It's always about how you respond to getting punched in the mouth. We knew we had to come out and have a great couple weeks of practice, which I feel like we did, we all feel like we did, and we put a good product on the field that game.

I think that we know what we're capable of, and we're just excited to continue to keep growing because we have to play a better game to play against this team we're playing Wednesday.

Like I say, we're blocking out all the noise from what's happened in the past, from what people are saying about us, and we know who we are, and we're focused on getting better each day before the game.

Q. Coming off the Michigan game, a lot of bad talk around town, and you used that and really dominated Tennessee. How do you keep that edge?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, we blocked out all the bad noise and you've got to block out all the good noise, too. We're not focused on anything other than coming to work every day and being with each other, finding out ways to get better and making the improvements we need to make and take those into the game.

Q. Looking back at your senior year, what are you most proud of?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think it's hard sometimes when you get caught up in the midst of things. You look back and think about stuff.

But I think that that might be a time for hopefully here in another month. But I'm just proud of the way that this team has fought all year. It hasn't been easy, hasn't been easy for a lot of us since we got here, and here we are about to

play a great team in Oregon at the Rose Bowl, the second round of the playoffs, and we're just so grateful. We thank God for this opportunity every day and have an attitude of gratitude. Just really excited that we get this chance to go and compete against them again.

Q. (Indiscernible) what's the best advice he's ever given you?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, that's a good question. I feel like I've got a lot of the coaches and older players, that I've gotten a lot of great pieces of advice. I think one of the best ones is probably that it's never going to go the way you're expecting it to go. You have a plan in your head. I think when you get here you're highly recruited like a lot of us are, or I was, you think it's going to go a certain way, and a lot of times God has a different plan for you. If you stick with it and keep showing up every day and stacking days to weeks and weeks to months and months to years, by the time you look up you're going to be in a good spot.

Q. What's that area that you've seen the most growth in yourself?

JACK SAWYER: I don't really like to talk about myself, but I think that from my class, I think we've all matured. We all needed to mature a lot, and we did. I think that's why you see so many guys in my class, classes below me, their play rising. I think the maturity level of this team is really high. I think that's been huge for us.

Q. Can you talk about what it's going to take to come out victorious Rose Bowl day.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, Coach Day says it all the time. We've got to do our job at a high level and we've got to execute and have poise because we know that, like I said, when you're playing a great team like Oregon is, they're going to make big plays. As bad as we want to say they're not going to make any big plays, they're going to make big plays because they're a great team, well-coached team. To have the poise, staying in the moment, and coming out and executing.

Q. When you step out on the field that day, talk about your emotions; what will it feel like?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, we played here my freshman year, and I got ejected from the game for targeting. But the game -- the stadium is one of the coolest environments I've ever played in. You see the mountains in the background and the grass is awesome. I'm sure the emotions are going to be high. We're playing in the second round of the playoffs against a great team, so I'm sure the emotions are going to be through the roof.

Q. Who's your inspiration in life?

JACK SAWYER: That's a good question. Who's my inspiration in life? I could talk about a lot of people, but I'd say my family. Yeah, my dad, my mom, my sister. Those are the people that are the closest to me who I love and who have been there with me through the good and the bad times. Always kept me even keeled and always had that belief in me. They're definitely the reason that I'm here today.

Q. What words do you live by? Motto, phrase, words?

JACK SAWYER: I think one of the phrases that I've tried to live by the last three years is that it costs zero dollars to be kind. I think that being nice to people, holding the door for someone you don't know leaving a coffee shop or saying hi to someone you know, it's stuff like that that costs zero dollars to be a nice person.

I thank my mom for teaching me that. She's an angel. That's definitely one of the quotes I try to live by.

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

JACK SAWYER: Friends, family and fans, I love you guys. Thank you guys for the endless support, and excited for this opportunity.

Q. Does it feel like any more of a grind this year with the expanded playoff, playing more games?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that it's an extended season, so you're playing more games than we're used to here at a college level. It's turned into really kind of like the NFL playoffs. You've got to be that extra focused to be locked in for longer extended periods of time. I think our team has adapted really well to that. I think if you talk to the Oregon players, as well it's a different feeling this season because it's longer and it's extended so you've got to be more locked in.

So there's definitely a little bit of a difference, but I feel like we've adjusted really well to it.

Q. Do you feel like it prepares future athletes for the next level?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think it's great for the game. I think the 12-team playoff was what was right for the college football landscape. So many great teams have missed out on opportunities beforehand with the four teams, and it gives a chance to come in and compete. I think that

there's definitely a difference, but I think that it's the right thing for the game.

Q. Do you have any memories of the Rose Bowl growing up?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, a bunch of them. It's the granddaddy of them all, so when you're watching it growing up, it's always one of the games, primetime it's on. But yeah, I remember watching Ohio State when I was in high school and they played -- in '18 they played Washington in the Rose Bowl I believe it was, and always wanted to play there. Wouldn't you know my freshman year I got to play here, and now here I am again in the playoffs. I just thank God for this opportunity.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports