

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

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Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes Emeka Egbuka

Press Conference

Q. When you guys look back, what did you take from those moments?

EMEKA EGBUKA: I think any time where you have a loss and you don't take it as an opportunity to get better, you shorten yourself. That's what we did as a team. We did it offensively and defensively, and we were able to be successful up until this point to get to where we are now.

Q. How much does the confidence go through the roof after a game like against Tennessee?

EMEKA EGBUKA: Every week is a new week, and we know that we have to put our best foot forward on the field every single time. We are not letting it get to our heads or having big heads about this. We are going to have to go out on the field and do it this week.

Q. What did you learn about your quarterback?

EMEKA EGBUKA: I think he's a tried and true competitor. I think he's a leader for this team. I'm so incredibly grateful he was able to come here out of the transfer portal. He's been everything we needed at that position.

Q. Jeremiah has had an incredible season as a freshman. How have you watched him grow over the course of the season, and what's your relationship like with him?

EMEKA EGBUKA: Yeah, I think that he's my roommate whenever we travel and home games and stuff like that. We are able to spend some time together and it's a little bit of like a big brother/older brother type of thing.

I'm super proud of J.J. and obviously he comes in as a very highly touted recruit, one of the most athletic guys that I ever spent my time around. But seeing the way he's developed and his maturity and his mentality when it



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comes to the game, that's really where I've seen the most improvements.

Q. When you look at Coach Day, how do you judge the way he's led this team through some of the highs and lows that you've faced in the last month?

EMEKA EGBUKA: He's been my head coach ever since my freshman year since when I first set foot on campus, and he's improved year-in and year-out. And he's a genuine dude who truly cares about his players and the input that they have to say.

I think that every year that I've been here, he knows the shortcomings are where we fell short and he doesn't dwell on those and he uses those to move forward. I think he's done an excellent job, and I'm glad to have him at the helm of our ship.

Q. You were one of the few people to play in that game against Utah here three years ago. What do you remember about that game?

EMEKA EGBUKA: I remember it being an instant classic. I think you could rewatch that game and never get sick of it. It was an electric atmosphere. It was a great battle on both sides, and that's traditionally what the Rose Bowl has been. You look at the history behind this game, it's traditionally a Big Ten school versus a Pac 12 school.

We're looking forward to playing in this game with all the good tradition that goes into it, the beautiful scenery and the amazing venue. We're just super grateful and blessed to be here.

Q. What's it been like having Chip as your offensive coordinator?

EMEKA EGBUKA: It's been amazing. He's a great mind when it comes to football. Even before the season when we were just in summer training and doing installs and stuff like that, just being able to learn from him and grow my knowledge of the game has been very big for me.

But just his mindset, when it comes to the things that are

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not football and how he's developed us as young men is really inspiring, as well.

Q. With Will, how quickly did he kind of integrate himself into the team with you guys?

EMEKA EGBUKA: Yeah, I think that kind of the second he stepped on campus, we felt like he had already been here for multiple years. So that's just the type of vibe that you get from Will, and he stepped in and he was ready to work from day one.

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

EMEKA EGBUKA: It's definitely been a different journey and you can feel it. In a sense it's preparing us for the next level. You have many more games in the NFL. So kind of just being able to practice putting that load on your body is something that has been very helpful for me but you know, whether it was -- you have one game a year or you have 20, you get to the place that you're at and we're here now so we are laser focused on this game and we couldn't be more grateful to be in this position.

Q. Do you feel any pressure as an offense to put up points?

EMEKA EGBUKA: No. We want to put up a lot of points but we never feel pressure in any sense. I think that just the place that we are, I think that we're in control of a lot of things. So if we just play our style of football and do what we're coached to do, I think that we'll be successful.

Q. Any memories of the Rose Bowl growing up? Any specific games?

EMEKA EGBUKA: I think the strongest memories have to be the one I played in my freshman year. That was an amazing game that I was able to be a part of, just the atmosphere, and the memories and being able to win this. Jackson's career day. Me having some big catches and some big plays and big kick returns and stuff like that, those are memories that will never leave me for sure.

Q. Any advice from that game that you can give your team?

EMEKA EGBUKA: The only advice I can give is don't make the stage too big. I think that you have to take it in because playing in the Rose Bowl is something that you dream of as a little kid. But at the end of the day, it's the same measurements on the football field and same game you played since you were eight years old. Don't make it bigger than what it is and just be yourself.

Q. Obviously you guys got off to a hot start, being able to score, what does that do for your confidence?

EMEKA EGBUKA: Yeah, scoring the first drive of the game is definitely a big momentum boost that you can get in football. But you know, football games can go a plethora of different ways. Coach Day always said to us when we come in for halftime, you can either be winning, losing or the game to be tied. You just have to know how to battle back from every scenario because not every game goes exactly to script like you would like to.

Q. What did you admire about --

EMEKA EGBUKA: I think this is from when I was in elementary school to middle school. Obviously they have great jerseys but I think the main thing was the best player to ever come through my high school committed to Oregon, and I was a big fan of his at the time. I always went to the high school games when I was in middle school, watching them play and watching him do his thing out there and when he committed to Oregon, I watched very closely everything they did. I was a big fan at the time, especially being from the Pacific Northwest. But it was mostly credit to Fotu T. Leiato.

Q. He was older?

EMEKA EGBUKA: I'm not sure exactly how much older he was than me. I think when I was in sixth or seventh grade he was a senior or something like that. My quarterback all through growing up, who was the same age as me, his older sister was dating me.

So whenever I went over to his house and stuff like that, he would be there and he knew who I was a little bit because I was doing my thing in Pop Warner youth football and all that type of stuff. I think he saw something in me, and was able to give me a little bit of experience and advice when it came to football.

Q. What did you admire about him as a player and person?

EMEKA EGBUKA: It's a fun fact. He has the most viewed huddle highlight of all time. If you go to his huddle and see how relentless of a player he was, just what you think of when you hear the word football. Like he's out there decapitating people and hitting people as hard as he can. He played very, very hard and that's something I really admired about him.

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