

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Tuesday, December 31, 2024
Pasadena, California, USA

Coach Ryan Day

Ohio State Buckeyes

Coach Dan Lanning

Oregon Ducks

Coaches Press Conference

DAN LANNING: We are thrilled to be here today. It's an exciting part of the football season. I think this is always one of my favorite parts of the year where you get to watch some historic teams get the opportunity to battle out there on the field.

I know our players have enjoyed every bit of the experience. We're grateful for the Rose Bowl and the experience they've provided for our team. It's certainly a different landscape this year because of how bowl games are set up, but the Rose Bowl has been first class in every way.

Growing up as a kid, you remember getting to be part of games like this. This is one we're really thrilled to compete in. Obviously Ohio State's a great team. This will be a fun challenge for our guys.

RYAN DAY: I echo what Dan said. First off, I want to thank everybody with the Rose Bowl committee. They do an unbelievable job here. It's one of the greatest settings there is in college football. And we're excited to be here for a lot of reasons.

This is the third time I've had an opportunity to be here, and it is a beautiful setting, and we have a great opponent here. And a lot of respect for Oregon and how Dan runs his program and his players and his team.

Very unique situation in that we're both now in the Big Ten, but when you look back on the history of the Big Ten and the Pac-12 and the match-ups that have been before, I think it makes it even more special, this game. Excited about that.

Also, for us, having Archie Griffin and the statue built here and also at Ohio Stadium, just a lot of history here at Ohio



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State in terms of playing in this Rose Bowl.

Excited for the game and excited for our fans to get here and get into LA and obviously enjoy the game.

We've had a great week of preparation. Like Dan said, different preparation. It's not really a bowl game, quote/unquote, with events. It's more about a playoff game and so excited about the opportunity to play.

Q. Wondering how this is different, preparing for a Rose Bowl where you have two teams that could win it all yet knowing that you still have two more to go?

RYAN DAY: It's a different experience. It's more of a -- it's like being in routine of a game week, and usually when you prepare for a bowl there's a whole month of preparation. This is more of a routine.

So I think we've all seen this coming, so have prepared for what these will look like in terms of preparation. But it's been good for our guys. There's no classes right now. They've been able to focus on football, getting out here, getting acclimated and getting to work. I think the biggest thing it's like being in a road game during the week, just a longer season.

DAN LANNING: Very similar thought process for us. You can't worry about the next game until you take care of business in this game. For us, that's the way our team's approached it. Obviously when you play a team like Ohio State you have to bring your best. So I don't think you can look too far down the road. You have to focus on right now.

It's been -- you wait until you get seven days out and you try to set it up very similar to what a week would look like for a normal week preparation during the season.

Q. What do you respect most about the way the other person runs their football program?

RYAN DAY: I think, first off, Dan does a great job in terms of recruiting. Recruits very talented young men with a lot of high character. They're very well coached and they play

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very, very hard.

And you can see that when you put the film on, because when you watch people and you see different programs, at the end of the day you've still got to watch the film and see how guys are playing. In all three phases they're well prepared and they play really hard.

DAN LANNING: I can share that sentiment. Obviously a really talented team. That's kudos to the work they do in the offseason and during the season. Recruiting is something you've got to do every single day. I think both of our programs do that at a high level. You can see that with Coach Day and the people they bring into their program.

More than that, when you turn on the film, you try to find weaknesses in an opponent. It's really hard to find weaknesses at Ohio State in all three phases. The way they play on special teams, the effort, the guys they utilize -- a lot of places you'll watch and you'll see certain plays, they don't have their best players on the field. Ohio State has their best players on the field consistently. They play hard for each other and it shows up.

Q. How important is it do you all see the importance of your quarterback sort of having visualization sessions, for want of another term, for games of this magnitude to anticipate what's coming, et cetera?

DAN LANNING: We always talk about playing the game as many times as you can before you play the game. I think that's really important, regardless of the setting, whether that's the meeting room, a walk-through, sitting in your hotel room at night. How many times can you play the game before you play the game? Trying to picture what the opponent might do.

And I think if you do that, that gives you the best opportunity to be successful really on game day when you can visualize a lot of those different experiences that are going to show up in a game on game day. If you can do that in advance, that gives you a great opportunity to be able to adapt and adjust when the game comes.

RYAN DAY: Agreed. I think for the quarterback position, it's probably the most important, but it's important for all positions. I think, when you get to this point in the year, when you watch how NFL teams prepare late in the season, into December, you notice that there's a lot of that going on, whether it's walk-throughs, meetings. You have to visualize things. You can't always do everything the same way you did in August or September.

So you have to fall back on your experiences but then you also have to anticipate what's coming next. And that's a

big part of this time of year. And having the discipline to put that work in when you're multiple months into the season.

I think typically that's the team that's going to outlast their opponents is continuing to do what you just said, visualizing things and doing the mental work, so when you get into the game you can fall back on your training.

Q. With the commissioner's meeting to discuss a possible format change as soon as next season, in part because of seeding like in this match-up this early in the quarters, what are your perspectives on what the seeding changing should be if the conference championships continue to get first-round byes or if it should be more truly seeded as they're discussing?

DAN LANNING: Furthest thing from my mind right now. I'm worried about right now.

I think college football is going to continue to see change. I think our job as coaches is to continue to adapt. Ultimately, what an awesome game this is, right, what an opportunity this is.

But I'm sure the people that need to be able to assess that will assess it, but that's not my concern right now at this point in the season. Our concern is Ohio State.

RYAN DAY: Same here. Focus is on this Rose Bowl and this game. But I know we're all learning, everybody's learning, as we're going through this new format and I'm sure after the season there will be time to discuss those things.

Q. You guys played each other week seven, one of the match-ups a lot of the country saw as a potential national championship rematch. Now months later down the line, two different teams, two different identities. How do you both stay the same with your game plan and not focus on what the media is talking about?

RYAN DAY: Well, first off, I think that Oregon, certainly in that game, played a tremendous game and has continued to get better as the season's gone on. But I think both teams are just in a different place than we were midway through the season, and it's going to come down to the play on the field.

And there's a balance there of the things that your team has built their foundation on, but also having changeups and mix-ups. And it's about match-ups, and we know that. It's about match-ups on our end, it's about match-ups on their end. And then understanding that in all three phases

it all has to work together.

So you see this in the NFL playoffs a lot where teams will play each other again later on in the season. This is an example of that. So you're going to see it more and more as we move forward and it's just going to become part of college football.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, ultimately I feel like great teams have tendencies. You're supposed to. There's things that Ohio State does really well that I'm sure they'll work to do in this game. And there's things that Oregon does really well that we're going to try to do in this game as well.

It's a little bit of a double-edged sword of how much do you want to change going into the next game. But I'll say this: Every time you turn on Ohio State's film, you see new wrinkles. You see Coach Day and his staff coming up with new things that make it a challenge to prepare for. And I think we challenge our coaches here to do the same thing.

Like he said, we're different teams at this point. At Oregon we talk about trying to be the best version of ourselves toward the end of the season. That's when you have to play your best ball. And we'll certainly need to be able to play our best ball and expect the same from them at the end of the season here.

Q. Five Florida State basketball players sued their head coach for unkept NIL promises. Your two programs are at the apex of that. Short of, I guess, congressional intervention or collective bargaining, what is the future of that right now?

DAN LANNING: He wants me to answer this one first, I want him to answer this one first. I'll say this, again, furthest thing from my mind right now. Growing up in the Midwest, you have to be a man of your word. What you say is what you have to do, I think that's something we believe here at Oregon.

I don't think there's a lot of clarity in college football right now I think everybody realizes that and I think we'd all be in favor of having some clarity. But you also want to compete to be the best.

Each school is different in how they operate. I know at Oregon we're about integrity and what we say is what we do. But I can't speak to that situation because I don't know enough about it.

RYAN DAY: It's hard right now, a day out of this game, to be commenting on something like that. I appreciate the question. Our focus is on this game right now.

That being said, when you start getting into these conversations, obviously the legal folks start getting involved. And I think, for all of us, we would like to have more structure in those areas to alleviate some of those issues.

Q. Dan, this isn't the first time that Oregon is playing in Southern California this season. So, what does it do for recruiting, just getting your product on the field in this region attracting those So Cal recruits?

DAN LANNING: For us, we challenge ourselves to make sure we can sign the best across the nation, but certainly California is a hotbed for us in recruiting. It's a place we want to make sure we have a stand. And we want to go get the best of the best.

So, getting to play in premier games like the Rose Bowl, I think that's what kids on the West Coast dream of. And being here and having that opportunity is certainly something that's going to help us in recruiting.

Q. The first game you guys played, Oregon hit eight chunk plays of 25 yards or longer. I guess I would just ask Coach Day, obviously the defense has played much better in the seven games since then. What systems in place do you have to not allow that type of performance again? And for Coach Lanning, the chess match of taking what their adjustments are and still trying to hit those big plays?

RYAN DAY: Want me to just give him the game plan? (Laughter).

Certainly coming out of that game that was a huge part of the game. I thought Coach Stein and everybody on their staff did a great job of scheming up some plays to attack us and then did a great job of executing. I thought the route running and throwing and catching and protection, it all goes in together and they did a great job in doing that and creating X plays. And that's a huge factor in winning and losing games. And coming out of that game we certainly recognized that. That was no secret.

We've worked hard to make adjustments in those areas. We know that we're going to see a lot of the same type of things coming into this game. I'm sure it's not going to be the same exact style, but they're still going to have those type of ways to attack us.

We've got to do a great job of getting lined up. We've got to do a great job of communicating. And then posting up, we have to get to the football and understanding what's going on.

DAN LANNING: Same on the other side of the ball. There were a lot of lead changes and score changes in the game last time. There were explosive plays on both sides. So, the team that probably has the least explosives on their defense and the team that creates the most on their offense is probably going to have the most success.

Q. Ryan and Dan, maybe hard to talk about or predict what the future is going to be with NIL and that concept. When you look at where these two programs have come from in terms of how you built a roster in the modern era of college football, how do you feel both of your programs have been on the forefront of that across this modern landscape?

DAN LANNING: I would just say from the day that I've gotten here at Oregon, I've always felt Oregon is about innovation. I talked about adapting as a really important trait right now in college football and being able to adjust on the fly. That's something that we're prepared to do as we continue to move forward. So I'm glad to be in a place that's on the forefront of that.

RYAN DAY: I think all programs want to make sure they're doing everything they can to put the most talented roster together and talent acquisition. But we also have to continue to build our culture.

So that starts in high school recruiting and then developing and retaining those men who understand what it means to be in the program. And then adding pieces through the transfer portal.

That's how we look at it, and we need to do a great job of identifying those prospects and recruits that want to be at Ohio State, and then building those guys up so that in year two, three, four, they understand what it means, so that when adversity hits at some point, you stick together as a team and as a culture. That's been a big part of it.

But also we all know how fortunate we are to be at Ohio State where we have the resources to make sure the guys have what they need that want to stay at Ohio State. And for those who want to join the group and fill holes that may be in the roster, that we have those resources as well.

Q. In a game as big as this one, how do you guys balance talking about the importance of momentum and capturing it but also responding when momentum's maybe not on your side?

RYAN DAY: First off, you've got to be in the moment. You've got to create your own momentum. And execution fuels emotion, and knowing there's going to be a lot of back and forth, just like in the last game, there was a lot of back

and forth in that game. You look at the way it started, the way it was in the middle and the way it ended.

So understanding we all have to have poise throughout the game, knowing it's going to be a four-quarter battle.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, ultimately it is about execution over emotion. That's something we spend a lot of time talking about. And your ability to get to the next play is the most important play, regardless of the result.

So there will be momentum swings in this game just like there are in every game, but it's just that. It's just momentum. You have to have the ability to either break it or sustain it. And those are things that you try to train throughout the season and throughout practice.

Q. I know it's hard to zoom out when you're so hyperfocused on the task at hand tomorrow, but I just wonder, if you could, think about all the people who have been instrumental in getting you at the stage you're at today. Is there someone you'd like to give a shout out to that you wouldn't be sitting here without?

DAN LANNING: How much time have we got? I mean, I'll start with my wife, Sauphia. I think anybody who is a coach in this profession realizes there really isn't balance, I've said it before, there isn't balance if you want to be great. You need great support structure around you.

There's a lot of people that believed in me and gave me opportunities. I think there's unbelievable coaches across the country that certainly deserve and would do a fantastic job in this role that I get to sit in. I don't take that for granted. I'm very blessed.

But as blessed as anything to have the wife I have at home taking care of those three boys I think they got to enjoy Disneyland yesterday. I think she really enjoyed it right around 8:30 a.m., but I think maybe at 8:00 p.m. at night she was ready to get back home. Even though we had a long day of work here, I know she was working her tail off there yesterday.

RYAN DAY: Same with me. It's about family. When you talk about family, first off, it's Nina and the kids. I've known Nina my whole life. She's been with me since we were 6 years old. We've been through a lot together.

And when it comes to great moments in life, you've got to hug the people you love the most and enjoy them. When you go through difficult times, you hang on the best you can to the ones you love and you just keep pushing forward, keep moving forward.

So that's really the foundation, I think, of any coach. I'm very fortunate to have a family who is just very, very supportive.

But it quickly goes to the players. These are the guys who are on the field. I think sometimes in football, the coaches get a lot of the attention. But ultimately this game is played by the players. And we have a great coaching staff and great support system in the Woody that pulls for each other.

And, again, as much as the focus sometimes comes on the coach it's about our players and our coaches in that building and the work that they put in. And ultimately it's about the team.

There's a lot of things along the way give us an opportunity to get to where we are, coaches, people in our lives but ultimately it comes down to family. Your family that's close to you in your house and also your football family.

Q. Dan, the way Tez Johnson told it yesterday was that Bo Nix brought him to you. What was that process? What did you know about him before he got here, and what has he added? Because he couldn't shut up yesterday.

DAN LANNING: He likes having the mic in front of him, doesn't he? Tez has been unbelievable for our program. But, yeah, Bo sat in my office and said, I have this wideout that I think can really help us.

I don't know if he told me at the time of his relationship of Tez, but once he entered the portal and we turned the film on, it was clear he was a player that could help us.

We've been unbelievably blessed to have him on our team. He's a real competitor, and that competitive spirit carries over to every single player on our team. So I know he's one of those guys that grew up dreaming of being a guy that played at Oregon. He didn't get to go to the original Auburn-Oregon game because Bo was playing for Auburn. And Tez would have been wearing an Oregon jersey.

For him to get the opportunity to live out his dream and play here, it's been really rewarding to Tez and to our program.

Q. Ryan, you guys would have to play 17 games to win a title; Dan, 16. What's the wear and tear been on your team in a season that long? And what have you learned in trying to manage a team through a season that long and will continue to have to evolve going forward?

RYAN DAY: I feel like, all things considered, we're as healthy and as strong and as fresh as we've been all season. I think right now we're battle tested. I think we've built depth, and when we put the roster together we knew this was going to be the case, that we had to be strong powerful late in the season and continued to build as the season gone on.

And although we've had injuries in certain positions, I feel like, right now, we're playing as fast and as violent as we've played all season.

There's a lot that goes into that. I won't get into all those type of things. But I think as we continue to move forward in this format, it's something we all need to consider.

DAN LANNING: I think, for us, it's something you prepare for throughout the summer, knowing what the season could look like and kind of having a 365-day plan of how do you want to prep for these moments.

I'd have to give great kudos to our sports science staff, our training staff, our weight room staff. Very similar to Coach Day, our team is relatively healthy. Nobody feels great at this point in the season because of the time of the season you're in, but our players are putting up some PRs in the weight room, are doing some unbelievable things at this point in the season, when you talk about going into game 14 for these guys.

I think that's huge kudos to our staff and the job that they've done making sure they stay fresh.

Q. Dan, was hoping for clarity given Bryce's importance to the team, the program, clarity on the waiver that you're seeking. Is it simply because the baseball clock is adversely impacting the football clock, or are there other grounds there?

DAN LANNING: I won't really get into the details of it. Like I said, we're a day out from this game. I don't think that's where Bryce wants the focus; certainly not us either.

But if there was an opportunity to have Bryce back that would be great for him. He certainly deserves it. He hasn't played four seasons of football here. I think he deserves that opportunity if it comes his way.

Q. Ryan, how much different do you feel now than you did the week leading up to the Tennessee game with all the talk that was going on in Columbus, Ohio about you and your future and your team and stuff? Do you feel refreshed? What is the feeling you feel now going into this one?

RYAN DAY: Very similar -- hungry, focused. Every opportunity you get on the field is an opportunity to prove people right and prove people wrong. That's just the approach of our team.

We were excited to get back on the field, but we're excited about playing in this game as well. A lot of football ahead of us. And that's just really been the focus.

And you have to learn from what's gone in the past. If you don't, then you'll repeat yourself. So every week we have to learn, whether it's winning a game by 28, the issues are still on the field. You lose a game, you have to learn from what happened. And then you grow from there as the season has gone on.

We're both here in the Rose Bowl. And along the way there's twists and turns. You don't know how you'll get to this point right here, but here we are. And an opportunity to play against a great team, and it's another opportunity for us to play Oregon again in the same season. So we feel fortunate for that to have happened.

The only way that was going to happen was if we won the last game. If we want to continue to move on, we have to win this game here as well.

Q. Tomorrow I know a lot of people are looking forward to the sun setting on the Rose Bowl. I wonder if each of you have a moment you're looking forward to tomorrow?

DAN LANNING: Hopefully when that thing hits zero the Ducks win. That will be the hope.

I think it's really hard in our position and certainly for our players, you ask people to be in the moment. I don't know that we ever get the opportunity to truly reflect on seasons, get the opportunity to really reflect on games.

This is a game that everybody on our staff, every person on our team is really thrilled to be a part of. But there probably won't be a lot of chances to sit back and just soak in the moment. And that's okay because that's part of what makes it so special there at the end.

RYAN DAY: Agreed. When you're at the Rose Bowl, you're like on sensory overload. The grass is greener, the sky is bluer, the sun is more yellow. It's a beautiful setting.

But once the foot hits the ball, it's time to go play. Anybody who knows playoff football, everything gets ratcheted up and intensity just gets ratcheted up. The electricity in that stadium tomorrow will be special.

Q. Ryan, you said the other day that bringing in Will, a transfer-portal quarterback wasn't typically how Ohio State has done things in the past in terms of bringing quarterbacks in and recruiting them, develop them. For both of you, what are the benefits and challenges that you guys have seen throughout this season of bringing in a portal quarterback, from the seniority aspect, but also integrating that into a roster that you guys hope will compete for a championship?

RYAN DAY: Let me first off say that I think Oregon has done a great job with Bo and also with Dillon, bringing them in in one year, a short period of time, getting them acclimated to their offense and operating at a very high level.

That's not something that just happens. It's something that when you watch it, typically it takes a while for someone to get used to the new language, how you call things, how you do things. So that's happened seamlessly, and a big part of that is coaching.

For us this year, we felt like it was the right thing to do for a lot of reasons. We saw a winner in Will. We saw a leader, someone who has won a lot of football games at Kansas State. We felt if he came in and understood how we did things on offense and surrounded him with the supporting cast that we have, that we had an opportunity to go make a run at this thing.

And I think as the season has gone on, you've seen him grow week in and week out. But ultimately it's going to come down to his leadership in this game.

DAN LANNING: Same thought. Anytime we look to add to somebody in our program, we're looking not just at what kind of player are we adding but what kind of character. We've been fortunate to hit in the portal have some success.

I think what that's done for our team, it's created unbelievable competition, not just at the quarterback position but several positions. When you have competition, that brings out the best in everybody. Brings out the best in all of our team.

At this point in the season, like Coach Day alluded to earlier, it gives you the opportunity to have depth and be strong and have strength in numbers towards the end of the season.

But Dillon has done an unbelievable job for us, just like Will has done for them. You talk about two great quarterbacks getting to battle it out on the field tomorrow, that's obviously really exciting.

