

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Oregon vs Ohio State

Wednesday, January 1, 2025
Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes
Coach Ryan Day
Jeremiah Smith
Cody Simon

Postgame Press Conference

Ohio State - 41, Oregon - 21

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ohio State.

Q. Coach, how much of tonight is a reflection on what you were hoping to get when you brought Chip Kelly on?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I thought Chip called a great game. I thought the whole offensive staff worked hard to put the plan together.

But ultimately it comes down to the players putting it on the field. I've said that all along. I think sometimes in this game coaches get too much attention. This is about these guys right here. A lot of good plays out there, but they've got to make it work. And I thought they really put it on the field and we came out aggressive.

But I thought Chip called an aggressive game and certainly had a big smile on his face after.

Q. You've been in a position last month that most coaches, maybe the first ever, where a large portion of the fan base has been displeased. And you guys had to come into a postseason under some tough circumstances. I'm wondering, what's it been like for you through this journey and how cathartic was it today to have the game you guys had?

RYAN DAY: Well, in this game, there are ups and downs along the way, and when things are going good you've got to hug the guys you love the most and when things aren't, you've got to hug them even harder. And you just hang in there and you keep swinging.



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I talked to these guys about it a couple of weeks ago. That's life. And this team is resilient. And when you surround yourself with great people, with great character, you find yourself working through difficult times.

At the end of the day, we wanted to win a national championship, and the way that we got here wasn't what we expected. It wasn't what we planned for.

But nonetheless, we had an opportunity to come back and play Oregon after we had already played them early in the season, and that's the only thing that mattered. And the guys have been doing a great job staying focused. The staff have stuck together.

But the players have stuck together and they're fighting to stay together because the winner gets to play together another week. The loser doesn't. So those guys have worked hard to stay together, and now we've got an opportunity to go play Texas and a lot of football ahead of us.

Q. Just looking at the enormous impact that Jeremiah has had on this season, on your team, how would you say he mirrors somebody like Marvin Harrison Jr., who you have seen develop and be able to do great things?

RYAN DAY: I think we always want to draw comparisons because that's what we do naturally. I think whether it's players or coaches it's easy for everyone to say, well, he's this person and -- not quite put him in a box but sort of categorize them based on somebody who has come before.

And Jeremiah is his own person. And I think the way that he's come in from the get-go, he had a look in his eye he wanted to make an impact as a freshman.

I think his teammates would tell you the same thing. And he's earned the respect of the teammates, not because of his ability. You guys see his ability, but to me it's the work ethic every day. He comes in. He's serious. He doesn't say a whole lot. But when he does, people listen.

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His maturity, physically, emotionally and mentally has allowed him to play like this. And remember, he's a freshman. So for him to be playing his best football late in the season speaks to his maturity.

Q. When Marcus Freeman was here after they played SC, I asked him, sometimes a defeat is the best thing that happens to a team. I know that's hard to say when you lose to your rival, but are there some aspects of that loss that may have, in the end, where you're at right now, may have been the best thing for your team? I see you shaking your head no already.

RYAN DAY: It's hard for me to say something like that. But I know that you're a sum of your experiences. And this team has had great wins this season. It's had some tough losses. And we have learned from those.

And you've got to grow and you've got to build and you've got to make sure you're focusing on your strengths and making sure that you understand what your weaknesses are. And I think that's a big part of it.

But ultimately it comes down to our guys. I just keep going back to that because these guys are resilient. We're at a place where you can hear a lot of noise, but they didn't do that.

And I'm very, very proud of our staff. I'm very, very proud of our players. But we're far from done.

Q. I asked you this a couple weeks ago. You talked about playing free, without fear of consequences. Over these last two games, it would probably look like that's what that looks like. What's been the shift in that mindset? What have you done? What has the team done to allow that to happen? Is it a focused effort on that?

RYAN DAY: I don't know. You can talk to the players about it. I think all year you make adjustments along the way. But we've focused hard after the regular season on our execution. And I know that sounds really simple, but it's something we talked a lot about in our walk-throughs, in our meetings.

It might be practices, it might be a walk-through in a hotel, might be a meeting. It may be one little tip that could give you that little bit to say, hey, this will help you execute on this play and this situation.

And then you also have to be situationally aware, which I think as the season's gone on we've done a better job of that.

And then the last piece is doing your job. Everybody has to do their job. Like, you take, for instance, the route that Jeremiah ran on the play where he stuck his foot in the ground and went across the field. It was a perfectly run route.

But the protection was there. The setup by Will of getting the whole defense to run one way, looked like it was a naked, and then we came back and threw the ball. There's so much that goes into that one specific play. And I think that we've really focused on that part of it.

And I think it's the same thing with the defense. I think that they all understand how they fit in with each other. And then it comes down to execution.

But then when you mix that with after the snap has been snapped, the physicality and how hard we're playing right now, I think those two things are the reason why you're seeing us play that type of football.

Q. There's been a lot of talk in your time at Ohio State about this program's record in big games and the way the last couple of years ended. Obviously this program has bigger goals, but to win the last couple of games in the way you did, do you take any personal pride in that as a coach in the journey?

RYAN DAY: Every game is big at Ohio State. And we know that when we came and when we decided to come to Ohio State. And certainly this game is huge for a lot of reasons.

But I think the most important for our team is that we had a chance to play together for another week. To me that's the most important thing.

Every game here is important. So when you lose, you've got to figure out how to move forward.

But when you recruit great people, with high character who care about each other, when you go through difficult times, you stick together. You don't splinter.

And, again, that's why whenever we're in these situations I just fall back on these guys right here. I wish you guys were asking these guys questions because they're the ones on the field. These guys are the ones playing, not me.

I'm just there to direct them and make sure we're all going in the right direction. These are the guys who are the warriors who are doing it on the field. And I just can't say enough about these guys.

Q. Jeremiah and Cody, what did you see today that was different from the first game? And what are some of the things you practiced that you thought were going to be there?

CODY SIMON: From the first game, I think our defense -- that was obviously one of our let-down games for our defense. One of the biggest thing we changed was our attitude and mentality. There were plays in the game we weren't aligned or ready to go. With an offense like that for Oregon, they thrive on that stuff.

For us, it was just that mentality we had to change. We went through a lot of tough conversations after that game and a lot of changes we had to make, but I think we're better for it now.

We made those changes. And like Coach Day said, it's all about execution. No matter what, no matter who is across the ball, you have to do your job. If you do your job, you're going to like the results.

JEREMIAH SMITH: Offensively, just after that game, we had a bad taste in our mouth. We just had to come in the next day and just see what was the issue, fix the issues and get on the field and work it.

But, you know, offensively we knew we had to get the ball to the perimeter, take shots and just win one-on-one match-ups. And that's what we did today.

Q. Jeremiah, your offense is so good when you guys get vertical. How does Will kind of help you guys along? And why do you feel like he has to prove himself week after week?

JEREMIAH SMITH: Will does a great job in practice just trusting us, just throwing the ball out there. We tell him, just throw it out there. We'll make a play for you. It don't matter if it's a bad ball or not, we'll make our quarterback look good.

But Will playing with that confidence that he has, just being a leader out there, I feed off his energy. He's just great guy. I love Will to death. And I would do anything for him.

Q. Cody, Coach talked about execution, execution. But this is an emotional game. Football is emotional. How have you as a captain worked with your team to just, let's balance the emotions with the execution and do this the way he wants us to do it?

CODY SIMON: That's probably the biggest part about football: It's a game about getting your body, mind and spirit right.

I think Coach Day does a great job, he wants us to, like, understand the moment, how the steps of each game goes, and we don't play that game a week ago, but we have to get our mind ready to be in that sense.

So obviously it was a lot of emotion, a lot of people talk about redemption. But, for us, it's really just about doing your job because our coaches put us in the right position, so we've just got to go and make the play. They've done it so well this season. We trust them 100 percent.

Q. With the college football landscape changing every single day, it seems like, what does it mean to you guys to win the Rose Bowl knowing that there's more football left to be played?

RYAN DAY: I think for us, we literally are taking it one week at a time, but we are -- I keep saying it, we're fighting to keep this team together because we have a great group of guys together.

I think that we believe that when we're executing at a high level, that we can play with anybody in the country. And so we have a lot of respect for Oregon. We have a lot of respect for Coach Lanning and his staff and his players. I think they're a very, very good team and well coached. We knew we had to be at our best today.

It will be the same thing next week. When you're playing in the playoffs, you're playing against very, very good teams. We hold ourselves to a high standard. So now we're going to have to get back. We're getting back. We're not staying the night. We're getting back on the plane, heading back to Columbus. We'll get some rest and then we'll focus on Texas.

Q. You always talked in these big games about your best players need to step up. These last few weeks, even going back to the Michigan game, the way Jack Sawyer has played, what have you thought about the way he stepped up and made an impact?

RYAN DAY: I can't say enough about Jack as a leader, as a person. He really stands for what it means to be a Buckeye, and to see him playing at a high level, he's the heart and soul of the front.

And Cody will tell you just what he brings every day. He brings a hard hat and a lunch pail and goes to work, and it's showing late in the season. He's playing a lot of great football. He's a big reason we won today.

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