

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Indiana

Tuesday, December 30, 2025
Pasadena, California, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Kalen DeBoer Press Conference

Q. Can you talk about just your history with the Rose Bowl, growing up, watching it, whatever the case might be?

KALEN DEBOER: It's funny you ask that question, because I would say this: Growing up in South Dakota and not having gone outside of South Dakota, it seemed like so far away, but you knew the game and you knew the pageantry around it.

And I remember the commentators saying what they said, the games being played, it seemed like such a distant thing in my mind, not growing up around Division I football, there in the middle of South Dakota, just didn't seem like something that was real.

Then as you get older and you get into high school, college, then you start kind of understanding what it really is all about, paying closer attention.

As you go through the years coaching, you just truly realize how special of a place this is. I've been in the Rose Bowl, in the stadium a number of times, coaching there at Fresno State and at Washington. And when you walk in, even when it's not the Rose Bowl game, you really can feel how awesome the place it is.

I know our guys are looking forward to this moment. I know a lot of people have this as kind of bucket list items when it comes to coaching and opportunity to be here. So it's pretty special.

Q. Does it blow your mind that Alabama has been to the Rose Bowl more than many Big Ten and old Pac-12 teams?

KALEN DEBOER: It kind of does. It kind of does. I wouldn't have guessed that. Obviously that's been made aware to me. That would not have been something -- if



**PLAYOFF
QUARTERFINAL**



you would have asked me true or false, I would have guessed wrong.

Q. How did growing up and playing at Sioux Falls and then coaching at Sioux Falls shape you into the person that you are and the coach that you are?

KALEN DEBOER: I think this is -- I can give you a long answer. I'll try to keep it short. But I think the playing part, being at a place that strove to -- was striving to be at a championship level, we won a national championship my senior year there -- and it doesn't matter, a championship is a championship. When you're the best of everyone you're competing against, to me, you're giving everything you have.

And it's all about here. There's more people watching, obviously, when you get to this level. But this is what matters because it's the people that you're coaching with, you're playing with, playing for that really matters.

But I grew to love the game. I grew to love the camaraderie that exists. And we were 2-8 my freshman year, 14-0 my senior year. I saw, not necessarily what a bad culture looks like, but I saw what a championship culture definitely looks like and how you can move the needle each day, each year, to get to the point where you're winning the big ones.

As a coach, having the opportunity where we fell short a number of times when I was an assistant coach, we went to many semifinals, and just learning like, man, it's hard to get over that hump. And if you just keep going, you can get there, but you've got to stay focused. You've got to be determined, and you've got to keep surrounding yourself with the right people.

Once we got over that hump, then it just kind of rattled to where we went to four straight national championships. And, again, that was four games, kind of like this would be. You understand that you just take care of the moment you're in, give everything you've got into the preparation. All the clichés that people talk about, that's really what you've got to live by.

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

Q. You went back to Sioux Falls over the summer. How important is that a place (indiscernible) is that being part of the crew?

KALEN DEBOER: The city of Sioux Falls and university, got to speak with the guys there and the football team at my alma mater. It's a special place because it, to me, was the heart and soul of why you love the game of football. And the camaraderie, my teammates, it's just really, like, genuine care for the game.

The people there, again, that's home. That's home. And it's a smaller state, so you pretty much know everyone. So getting a chance to go back there this summer and it had been a long time, it had been probably six, seven years since I really was there, and that was even a quick one, quick stint too. It was good to see a lot of familiar faces and get a chance to be around the people there.

Q. The balance of building the roster for '26 while you're in kind of the thick of it now, how difficult is that to kind of decide how to allot time, not just staff and all that?

KALEN DEBOER: Trying to build next year's roster and talk through that, it's certainly tricky because you have to have conversations right now. You have to try to have a pulse of what's happening with your current roster and how that looks next year.

You know the graduates obviously and you have a feel for the guys that might move on to the NFL early. But you also want to just really keep the guys focused on the moment we're in.

So there's that balance. If guys want to talk, I think they know the door's always open. That's the relationship, I think, we have now with our players as coaches. And so you welcome those things without trying to let it be a distraction.

So our guys have done an amazing job. I have to just compliment them. They realize how hard they've worked and other guys have worked and they're trying not to be a distraction, even though some of them are trying to figure out what is ahead.

It doesn't mean that they're thinking they're going somewhere. It's just, like, trying to figure out their role. They might be a young guy trying to figure it out. This is their first time through it, their second time through it.

So I certainly can appreciate what that process is for them and their parents. And as a family, as a parent, you're trying to do what's best for your kid, gathering that

information too. I'm certainly appreciative of kind of how they have to manage it as well as how we have to manage it as a staff.

Q. How do you kind of have your staff get the program ready so when the portal opens you're able to evaluate guys to pick who come through that way and be prepared for that part of it?

KALEN DEBOER: Everyone that makes a declaration that they're probably going to leave, you're evaluating them. And you're understanding your needs and you're trying to figure out if anyone that's kind of put it out there that they're going to leave, you try to figure out if they're going to meet the needs that you have.

Q. Bray and Kadyn, they talked about how the team was unbreakable. There was a moment in the summer (indiscernible) you want to describe this team in one word and the theme was unbreakable. Could you talk about that for a minute?

KALEN DEBOER: The question is about our theme being unbreakable.

There's a lot of ideas when you've coached, and I have a note in my phone that lists for years and years of great themes. I've always liked to have a theme that you can kind of hang your hat on. You want a theme you can hang your hat on when it's going really good and one that can get you through the tough times as well.

"Unbreakable," that was one of them that I had. And I try to guide the guys into maybe 10 or 15 that I think can kind of fit and see what ones they really gravitate to. These guys just really jump all over the theme, unbreakable.

I think even more so, as the season's gone on, they really came back to that. I think fall camp was, just as far as you building your mental aspect and the physical aspect and the things that come along with the grind of fall camp is one thing, but when we got into the season, we had these moments that really came up. They really went all in on that theme.

And it's been something that I'm proud of. I'm proud of how they've hung their hat on that. And it's been a rallying effort for all of them with that theme.

Q. (Indiscernible) some of the Indiana players, the coaches, we talked about the portal and how teams going to the portal having success. Why do you think a team like Indiana has had so much success in the portal compared to other teams that tried the same strategy?

KALEN DEBOER: Well, I haven't followed exactly how they've made it happen with their portal efforts. I know that a year ago there was a lot of continuity within their system, having brought players that have been part of the coaching staff. That's probably spot on with that fact.

I don't know, I mean, there's been -- I don't know if it's been the same number or what their portal numbers are, but they've obviously done a good job of filling in the gaps where they needed help and finding the right people as well. I think that's always a key.

Again, not knowing the ins and outs of who they had and how they got them, but knowing that they obviously have a very good football team and one that seems to gel well. And that's a credit to their coaching staff on how they've gone about their process of picking their team and bringing their team together.

Q. Cignetti mentioned your time at the Canyon Coyotes a moment ago. Could you talk about your relationship with them, with the Canyon Coyotes. That's what Coach Cignetti said.

KALEN DEBOER: My time with them. Where is that?

Q. I don't know. That's what I was asking.

KALEN DEBOER: I'm not sure.

Q. He must be playing with you. Can you speak about your relationship with him?

KALEN DEBOER: I really haven't spent really any time with him, obviously from afar and having coached there at Indiana. I pay attention to those programs I've been at a little bit more.

And just super impressed with what he's done in just two short years. There was a lot to build on, I think, and he's taken advantage of every resource. And obviously once you get that momentum going, you get the fan base, you get a team that really is rallying around each other.

And he's done an awesome job of taking advantage of that momentum and building a team that's extremely disciplined, well coached, detailed. You can see all the things that they're doing. Obviously a credit to what he does as a top man in how he's built a staff that really has their priorities aligned and doing a great job coaching up their team.

Q. When you look at Ty Simpson as far as how you have seen him grow over the course of the season

with his mentality, how have you seen him be (indiscernible) the entire offense and the success this fall?

KALEN DEBOER: As far as Ty and just his leadership and the mentality, I think there's a mentality -- and as you go through the season, I mean, this is game 15 for us. There's the ups and downs. And every game is not going to be perfect.

But his response and just what he's played through -- and it can be the mental part, it can be the physical part, it can be wins/losses. He just continues to stay the course.

I think right now as we continue to get more guys around him -- and guys making plays this last week against Oklahoma was a big part of it, making those 50/50 catches and the confidence that he has in them, it's showing up going both ways.

He's got kind of a renewed energy as we get to this new season when it comes to the playoffs. And I love it. That's what we need because when the quarterback steps in the huddle, you're going to go as the demeanor of the quarterback is. If he's in there confident, you're going to be confident as an offensive line, as a receiving corps around him.

He's done a great job of that all year, but he's especially done a good job in the big moments. When those critical times come, your trigger man is the guy that you're going to kind of lean on. And he did that again this last game against Oklahoma, making a lot of plays.

Q. What have you seen as far as when you look at (indiscernible), their success and consistency? How have you seen that consistency come off of them when the cameras aren't on them, when they're at practice or watching film?

KALEN DEBOER: I think there's a swagger that I think the best guys have. And Ty isn't out -- he's emotional and I'm sure people, you've all seen the videos of him passionate in the locker room. He's a team-first guy, and that is what you see out externally but that's really who he is internally.

I think our team more than appreciates how important the team is to him and how that's a priority to Ty ahead of everything else.

So that and I think there's a confidence that he has when it comes to the play-making ability. And he does it mostly with his arm, but there's critical times where he's used his feet also.

So big moments come. You know your quarterback's going to be important as the trigger man. And he's come through more times than not. You're not going to be perfect. Everyone is human. But he's done a great job in the big moments.

Q. You mentioned the momentum that Indiana has as a program. What's the added challenge going up against a team that has all this momentum the last two years coming from the bottom of the Big Ten?

KALEN DEBOER: They're undefeated for a reason. They've got a very good football team. They play well. And from our standpoint, there's a belief in who we are. And that's what you really you've got to focus on, is who are we? What we've been through, and how we've overcome is what we're proud of.

And this is the next challenge. This is the next opportunity for us. And, so, our guys are eager for it. I think they understand that the work that you do is what builds the confidence. And they've been doing that again here these last 10, 12 days getting ready for this game.

Q. (Indiscernible) following up as a freshman year, how have you seen him maintain that composure, maintain that confidence to be star player like he is?

KALEN DEBOER: When it comes to Ryan, he had such a big year as a freshman. I know you can always have more. But there's just been a nonstop level of just work that he puts in.

And, I mean, just his attitude. People can always say stuff, but they don't know. When you're there with him and you see the smile, the work, the team-first attitude that he has, you can't help but root for him, whether it's as a coach or whether it's as a teammate.

I just love the guy. The guy is super talented, and it hasn't been the perfect year. But everyone in this room, all the players, I know that they have nothing but love and giving them the support that they have because every day when he steps on the football field, he's trying to overcome and help us be better. And I know that's what he's done the last week and a half.

And he's going to have a game like he's had at different times where he goes off, and I'm just waiting for that moment because when it is, it's going to be awesome. And we're all going to be super happy for him. And I know that it's coming sooner than later.

Q. I know people like (indiscernible) talk about receiving yards, but how often has he made a

difference for this team getting you guys to this point, even if it's not showing up in the stat sheets?

KALEN DEBOER: When your high-profile guys are the ones that put the team ahead of anything that is personal, that's what you want. And that's how you build a team like we have that is pretty tight-knit. And Ryan's that. Ryan's a high-profile guy. He's a playmaker for us.

When his attitude is so positive, like it has been, I mean, just can't help but root for him, help him become better. I don't care if it's the quarterback, spending extra time with him and working on the timing; or as a coach, just trying to spend those extra minutes, making sure he's good as a person. But also talking through the football side of things and helping him develop and grow. It's all part of this process.

He's got an amazing future ahead of him. And we all want it right now. He wants it right now, but he's taken the steps every single day to realize the greatness that he's going to have, not just this year, next year, but for a long time down the road as a football player.

Q. I want to ask game-planning for this game. How do you try to get him the ball while also knowing that Indiana is going to harp in on him a lot and try to take him out of the game?

KALEN DEBOER: There's always intentionality on trying to get your guys that need to have their touches, their opportunities. And we, of course, will do that.

And I think there's other playmakers, too, that just feed off each other. We've got to be intentional with him. We know Germ, (indiscernible) across the board. Now you've got Lotty, and Isaiah made plays in the last couple of games as well.

Again, all of them working off of each other, the running backs making their plays, we've got Cuevas now back in the equation again.

The defense, having to look at all these guys and trying to figure out who you're trying to stop or what's the tendencies, that's what you want to give Ty as the trigger man to have his threats. Again, we'll be intentional with Ryan, but a lot of things just happen with the inner workings with the offense.

Q. With Josh Cuevas could you speak about him? (Indiscernible) speaking of every opportunity, Alabama, what kind of a player is he from your perspective?

KALEN DEBOER: Josh Cuevas, just obviously coming back home is special for him. Anytime you can do that as a coach and see the progress he's made -- he had that skill set.

He had a lot of catches and touches in his early years, Cal Poly, we saw that. Got an opportunity to get him up there, Washington.

When he wanted to come to Alabama, that was huge for us. He did a good job of letting things come his way. There were a couple of good tight ends, C.J. Dippre and Robbie Ouzts that were here and established. Obviously Josh knew the offense. He had a leg up on them that way.

He just continued to stay the course. He just continued to get stronger. He's always had twitch, great movement skills, but great ball skills. And now you're continuing to see that just evolve this year as he's getting more and more opportunities.

He's an in-the-moment guy. He doesn't shy away from the competition. He doesn't shy away from any of the pressure that comes being here at Alabama or being in big games. He embraces it.

He's got a great future. I think he's opened a lot of people's eyes to what he can be, not just as a pass catcher but evolved as a run blocker. We saw it a couple of years ago already, the physicality that he can have. And he's shown that week in, week out in the SEC.

Q. You and the (indiscernible) coach spent a lot of time in less fluid divisions of college football. Are you seeing any value of that how it's shaped you?

KALEN DEBOER: Well, I think when you go through the ranks -- and Coach Cignetti, as you're asking with your question -- I think you learn how to maximize what you have. And I think that might be the resources. That might be coaching staff.

I think there's an appreciation you have when you get to this level and the FBS, the FBS school where you have people now, just managing people and trying to get them aligned and heading in the same direction.

But I think schematically, I think there's, again, you trying to take advantage of the one or two players that were stars maybe that you had at the smaller college, but then you know you grow your systems to this point now where you have a lot more great players.

And he's done a great job again maximizing, teaching fundamentals. You can see it with turnover margin. You

can see it in just how they execute, whether it be run game or their defensive scheme. He's getting so much out of his players. That's a credit to him and what he's done.

I have to think that that had to be something that he's done, not just now but started a long time ago, whether it's learning under other people or taking it and applying it to the places he's been, the smaller colleges, as he's worked himself up through the ranks.

Q. Question about your general health right now. LT was saying he feels good and he's going to be back. Ty said (indiscernible) SEC title game he feels like a new person. And there's a bunch of guys -- is there a quiet confidence this is a little different Alabama team health-wise than what we saw in September or October and in the last few weeks?

KALEN DEBOER: Yeah, I would definitely say you could see it on the practice field. When you're getting an opportunity to get back to working with those guys that you've grown to -- if it's Ty, just how he feels and stuff, a few more days makes a big difference. We've had 12 or 13 days since the last game. We had the same thing before the SEC Championship.

Those bye weeks that we had early in the year, the week one bye week or the first bye week and the second bye week, we played better, for the most part, coming off of those bye weeks as well. So physically our guys, I think, are in a better spot than they've been the second half, most of the second half of the season.

So having these guys, first of all, back but having them back at the level of health that they are, it leads to, again, our own momentum internally, whether it's this game, but more importantly even the practices and just the level of intensity that they're bringing, how more fresh they feel. You can feel it.

And obviously some of it has to do with us being excited to play in the Rose Bowl, the second-round playoff for us. There's an energy to that as well. So we've had some really productive practices, high-level practices, that energy everyone has that, I think that you feel, the excitement that we have, is real.

Q. LT specifically, can you walk me through his skill set and his versatility?

KALEN DEBOER: LT is, first of all, just a physical presence, and then this year he's just kind of taken the parts where he was just coming short of getting quarterbacks on the ground, making plays in the backfield, he's doing that. He's done that now this year consistently

at a high level.

So it is welcoming to have him back out there. I'm excited to see him back out there, not just for our team and what he can do to help us, but for him too because he's loved by his teammates. But we want LT to realize the high level of success he can have individually, too.

Q. You've been unafraid to make daring calls in big games throughout your time here and Washington. But I imagine where does that fearlessness come from or aggression come from in these moments?

KALEN DEBOER: I think when it comes to moments, it's not being reckless and just always going for it. It's a balance of what is just trying to figure out what is best for our team's success, and you try to do everything you can, whether it's in the game planning that week or what you did in spring ball, fall camp to make sure that our guys -- the moment you're in, you just go execute the play to the best of your ability.

For us, it's practicing those plays, it's guys understanding when you get to this third-and-2 or this red zone play or this fourth down inside the 5, like we've had a number of times -- I think South Carolina, Auburn -- that we know those plays. It's not the same ones, but it's ones that we practice, at least in the family of concepts.

And those guys just trust and believe that they can execute. And that falls on the trust and belief I have.

Now, a lot of times when you do go for it, there's not just the confidence you have in your offense, but there's a confidence you have in the defense that they can step on the football field and mentally be able to feel like, hey, we gave the ball up in our own territory. They're not just going to collapse, that we are mentally strong that way, and we can go out there and produce and not just give in that moment defensively.

Q. This year you have Ryan Grubb back on staff, got the band back together for most of the career. How important was it to bring him back into the fold what's that allowed the offense to be for you?

KALEN DEBOER: It means a lot. I think it's allowed me to get back to just feeling like each side of the ball, each phase of the game you can kind of give the due diligence that you need to as a head coach to all areas.

And I mean, I think Ryan's done a great job, especially in the big moments coming up with the calls. We talked about the going-for-it moments and knowing he's prepared with his call, knowing that he's prepared his side of the ball

for those things.

I think in year two, our guys, those calls now were practiced a year ago with Coach Sheridan and the great job he did. But also now we've just continued to grow and develop, be ready for these critical times and be ready to execute.

Again, he does a great job leading his offensive staff. And obviously the staff has to lead the players and making sure everyone's aligned.

It's always a work in progress because there's going to be turnover again next year that we have on our staff or players. You reset and start over, but you have a trust and understanding of what you're trying to do and how you want to win. To me, that's the key.

It isn't always -- the thing I appreciate about both of our coordinators is that, first and foremost, it's about our team finding a way to win. It's not putting up the stats to be number one in the country. I think everyone out there knows how good of coordinators, each of these guys are. They're just out there to do what's best for Alabama.

Q. I imagine that it's a bit of a transition to go from Seattle to Tuscaloosa, mainly because of the (indiscernible) fan base. Just here for a hot second (indiscernible) when you first got hired, did you chat with him about prepare yourself for you're never going to go to the grocery store (indiscernible)? How did you prepare for that?

KALEN DEBOER: I think we all knew. We all know passionate -- I think it always goes back to internal. There's a passionate fan base, but internally it's about your desire to be your best and being your best and what that can lead to as far as success on the football field -- wins and losses, success offensively, defensively. I think it always goes back to the person individually and what their determination is to compete at the highest level.

The external stuff, we really try to stay clear of that. I think that's obviously a challenge because our players do see here -- we're here right now and you can tell the questions you get asked and what that direction is that people are trying to go with.

So, that's an all year-round thing, but especially as we're in the season, trying to help our guys through the noise that certainly is created out there when it's really good or even when you maybe had a game where you struggled.

Q. (Indiscernible)? Is that something you come up with (indiscernible)?



KALEN DEBOER: I can't say that I'm a die-hard boxing fan, but I have an appreciation for what it means to be, any individual sport, I never was a wrestler, never was a boxer, but to be out there and be in that moment and take the punches, I think there's just a direct application to it.

I've used the best fighters, Ali, in particular, and there's been a couple of other situations we brought up where you go and the old school, 15 rounds, just what that looks like in the early part of the boxing match, what it looks like in the middle, at the end.

There's just been a lot of times where we've applied that, and there's certain pictures of Muhammad Ali in particular that I've shown, him standing over his competitor, applying it to the toughness and the different, whether it's physical, mental. We really have, I think, done a good job of honing in on the emotional part this year, whether it's the discipline to make sure the team's always first and not have penalties and unsportsmanlikes that come along with the ups and downs of a game.

To go back to your question, I think there's a direct relation to a schedule you go through, and it's 15 rounds, whether it's the schedule or that individual game, and our guys just continue to keep swinging, keep punching. We really kind of honed in on the boxing piece. It's something the guys -- I always try to feed off what the guys relate to or what you feel like they're connecting to.

And every year it's different because every team is different. Every team's struggles and the things they thrive on are different. They've really connected with that more, so I continue to build on it.

Q. (Inaudible)?

KALEN DEBOER: That was the last one. We got into "Rocky" a little bit and some quotes there -- some of the best quotes come from those types of movies.

Q. If you could pinpoint one thing about Indiana, what would you say is the biggest thing they pose to you?

KALEN DEBOER: To our team? How balanced the football team: Offensive/defense/special teams, they don't beat themselves at all. That's a credit to their coaching staff, their roster all being aligned and playing team football.

It's something that I (indiscernible) our team in -- they've done that. You can look at the statistics they have, just where they're ranked in all of those areas. The fundamental things, the turnover margin would be one of

them that jumps out at me. That wins or loses you a lot of games.

They just are elite in that category, but they're obviously great running the football, against the run, efficient against the pass, passing the football. They're just a very well-balanced team, whether it's offense/defense or within their offense/defense, how they produce.

Q. When you were on the IU staff, facilities were improving, greater investment was being made. How did you on the staff at the time view the possibilities there when you were there?

KALEN DEBOER: I think, looking back, I hadn't been on campus there -- and I was probably going to stay where I was at, at Fresno. But I went to campus and felt it. I felt like, oh, there's the resources that you need. And then I think the people. There was Fred Glass at the time, Scott Dolson, just people that I respected and really got to know and appreciate what their vision looked like.

I appreciate what Tom Allen was doing at the time, the energy and effort he was putting into it. I saw what it could be.

Obviously Coach Cignetti has done a great job building on all of that and the people that are supporting him. So my family enjoyed living there, and it was a short stint, but it was one that certainly is a part of my journey and one I'm very proud of.

Q. Did you see something like this happening there?

KALEN DEBOER: I've never been caught up in what I want it to become. I loved being at the University of Sioux Falls and could have stayed there forever. I really could have.

Jumping around, Fresno State, being a head coach there, that was a place I could have been at forever. To me it was about the people and just enjoying the journey there.

When that happens and you're able to just give everything you've got, I really I loved being at Washington. Then I think, again, you enjoy what you're doing, and that applies to here. You love being where you're at.

When the people are all in place and all aligned and heading in the same direction, it's amazing what you can accomplish.

That leads to opportunities. And us, during that year, will hopefully lead to opportunities for our coaches, opportunities for our players to go make life better for them

and their families as well as they go, whether this year or the years to come.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

