

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Indiana

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Alabama Crimson Tide Deontae Lawson Press Conference



PLAYOFF
QUARTERFINAL



Q. You guys are in kind of a weird position. I guess the experts aren't really giving you a chance. You're the underdogs. That's usually not the case at Alabama. Is it fair to say you guys feel disrespected?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, I think -- yeah, yeah, honestly, but we felt like that all year. We felt like everyone is against Alabama. That's the chip that we use to play with on our shoulders just to keep that edge that we had every since is the first game of the season when we took that loss.

Yeah, it was definitely disrespect. We don't take that lightly for sure.

Q. Did a lot of your teammates talk about it, or the coaches or anyone brought anything up about they're the No. 1 seed, you're the 9th seed?

DEONTAE LAWSON: I mean, nah. We obviously know they're the No. 1 team in the country, for a reason. They're a great team. We don't really -- it really doesn't matter at this point. I think the best eight teams are still alive, and it just comes down to who is going to execute the best on Thursday.

Q. What is it that Indiana does offensively that is going to be a challenge to you guys?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, they're very efficient. You know, obviously the quarterback, he is elite. They got a great running game. Their backs run hard. They got elite receivers on the edge. They like to take their shots.

Just an efficient offense. Rarely makes mistakes. Just find a way to get the ball in the end zone. So it'll be a huge challenge for us.

Q. Does Mendoza remind you of anybody you faced in

your career?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Nah. I wouldn't say he reminds me of anyone. He's probably the -- honestly the most elite quarterback that we faced since Coach De Boer been here. He's just elite. We got to try to affect them early and it'll pay off for us in the end for sure.

Q. Just fun, rapid fire questions. The easiest ones of the day. Morning or night workout?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Morning.

Q. Would you rather have a show or an award named after you?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Award.

Q. Favorite road trip snack?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Probably Life Saver gummies.

Q. Song that gets your mind right?

DEONTAE LAWSON: I got a lot. Probably NBA, Young Boy, (indiscernible.)

Q. Yep. If it you could steal one of your teammates skills, who would that be?

DEONTAE LAWSON: It'll have to be Kadyn Proctor just because.

Q. Bit of an upset there. Emoji that you use the most?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Laughing.

Q. Everyone does the laughing emoji. Describe the Rose Bowl in one word.

DEONTAE LAWSON: Historic.

Q. Do you have any New Year's resolutions?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Just being a better me.



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Q. When you look at this season you really accomplished a lot in the last several weeks as far as (indiscernible). Over the course of the season to where you are to be able to be strong... national championship?

DEONTAE LAWSON: I think it's the trust that we have, just knowing everyone is going to do their job, and honestly I think it goes by how we practice, the way, we fly around in practice and just hold everyone accountable.

No matter if you're first, second, or third team, just it's just a certain standard that we pride ourself in, and that's been showing up in the game. It's just been giving us opportunities. Coach always said we create our own breaks by giving tremendous effort. That's what we trying to do.

Q. How have you all been able to block out some of the noise? Obviously a lot of controversy about Coach De Boer, and now you guys are finally where everybody wants you to be. How are you all staying connected and staying close-knit and still focus on the mission at hand?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, I honestly think that started in the offseason. You know, we knew it wasn't going to be just a fairytale season or anything like that. A word that we pride ourself on that's our theme is (indiscernible). You know, that's what we set in stone in the offseason, and as the season went on we been in situations where we could have broke and we just haven't.

Man, we just know the people that we got in our program, and we always say the people in this building are the only people that matter. That's the only opinion that matters. So I think that's the huge thing that we start with.

Q. 50 Cent Many Men. You guys come out and that's been a theme. What are some other songs that get you guys going?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, I think to be honest with you, we listen to a lot of things. We listen to NBA, Young Boy, just whatever they got on the speaker at that point. I'm sure couple of players probably cued some songs up and they know they get the team going.

I would say those for sure.

Q. Last from me. Who are some of the football players that you watched... (No microphone.)

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, man, to be honest with you,

growing up I actually played running back, so Adrian Peterson was somebody that I used to love watching his highlights. I thought I was going to be the next AP or whatever. Defensively for me definitely CJ Moseley. Just watching him and him being from Mobile, Alabama, you know, just really putting on for the city, having a fantastic NFL career, retire, just -- that's just somebody I look up to. He's a great role model for sure.

Q. You've had about a week of film, preparation on Indiana. What stands out about their offense?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, quarterback. I mean, he's very efficient. Doesn't really make a lot of mistakes. The running backs, they run hard. They got a solid athletic tight end. The receivers are good.

So I mean, they got elite players all across the field. You know, it'll definitely be a challenge for us. Them, they just do the same thing over and over and wait on someone to make the mistake. But that's going to be the key to the game, who can do their job the longest for sure.

Q. What does it take from yourself and the unit to force some mistakes?

DEONTAE LAWSON: We got to affect them early. You really got to just change the way they think, change the way that playcaller calls the plays. I mean, that comes with you got to apply pressure early. You got to affect the quarterback. That's going to be the biggest key to the game to be honest.

Q. How much does having a gutty win, comeback win in hostile territory prepare you?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, I wouldn't say it kind of prepared us for this moment or anything like that. That just -- man, we you always knew we had that in us. We know we're a resilient team and the game is not over until the clock is at zero. We're going to keep fighting and that's just our pride and that's the belief in this team.

We got full faith in everyone on this team. We know we can get the job done if we continue to fight.

Q. (Regarding 2023.)

DEONTAE LAWSON: It's kind of like a full circle moment for me kind of. Even starting the round one playoff at Oklahoma didn't go the way that I would've liked it to go in 2024; came back and got the job done. Then get another chance at the Rose Bowl. Man, it's definitely -- I'm definitely blessed to be here and it's just -- I definitely use it for motivation.



I just remember when the clock hit zero and I saw the confetti fall and I'm standing on the bench just watching Michigan celebrating or whatever, so I definitely don't want to feel that feeling again.

You can say motivation if you want.

Q. Indiana is a disciplined team. Only turned the ball over 8 times. How do you create takeaways in it game?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, that's the key to the game for us. We have to force some takeaways. I think the biggest thing is we got to apply pressure. We got to apply pressure, affect the quarterback, and put him in tough positions to just make the one-on-one throw.

At the end of the day, somebody got to make the play, and that's what we have to do. That's what we pride ourself in. That's what we're practicing. We'll get it done.

Q. We talked to a couple Indiana receivers; they said you guys disguise stuff really well. How important is that?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, it's critical. You know, even with an elite quarterback, he sees the disguise pretty well. We got to be extra dialed in to making him mess up honestly.

It's crucial. I mean, if you could mess him up to get him through a read that wasn't there, that produces the take away that we need, yeah.

Q. (Regarding New year's resolutions.)

DEONTAE LAWSON: Just want to keep being a better me to be honest. Not really. I'm sure it'll get me, but not really.

Q. Rose Bowl week. You have been in Alabama for four years. How would you put those four years into words if you were talking to one of your buddies back home?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Honestly, it was five years.

Q. Five years.

DEONTAE LAWSON: This is my fifth year. Man, definitely a rollercoaster of emotions. Man, I've grown so much and my mind is -- I feel like my mind is so strong.

Honestly, man, it's just truly a blessing. To know that 17 year old kid walking in here thinking he was all that

because he five star or whatever, but actually being humbled and knowing that you have to put a lot of work in to achieve the goals that you want to.

Sitting here now, 22 years old and playing in my second Rose Bowl, it's truly a blessing.

Q. What do you think the 17 year old had no idea was in front of him back then that you would tell him now?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, to be honest, that 17 year old would never expect to tear his ACL, come back, and just --

Q. How about the coaching change, too.

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, that's huge, too. I think my mindset. Ever since my injury my mindset has just shifted in a way. I'm actually grateful for that moment.

Q. So Indiana has been so good all year long. People have talked about them. You watched the film though. What makes them so efficient offensively?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Their discipline. The O-line works together well. The backs run hard. I mean, the quarterback, he's elite. They got weapons all across the field, so we just got to be detailed and disciplined in everything we do.

You know, we'll give them a challenge for sure, too.

Q. Assignment football, fill-in gaps, making Fernando uncomfortable. When you get a chance to play a Heisman typically it's everybody gets excited to play Alabama, does it put the a chip on your shoulder?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Man, you always want to just -- I wouldn't say chip, but you always want to go against elite guys. You just want to go against elite guys and see if the hype is real. I'm sure the hype is real because he's the Heisman, but, yeah, it just give us a little extra boost.

Q. Based on the film is he the best quarterback you've faced this year?

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, he's definitely the best quarterback we faced.

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