

Bucked Up LA Bowl Hosted By Gronk: Washington vs Boise State

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Los Angeles, California, USA

SoFi Stadium

Rob Gronkowski
Coach Jedd Fisch
Coach Spencer Danielson
Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It is my pleasure to introduce four-time Super Bowl champion Rob Gronkowski, the host of the Bucked Up LA Bowl hosted by Gronk.

ROB GRONKOWSKI: What's up, everyone? Welcome to the Bucked Up LA Bowl, everyone. This is going to be a great game. We've got two solid teams. I'm already drunk. I'm falling all over the place up here.

This is going to be great. It's the third year. I think it's going to be the best one as well. We've got the only football game going on in the world, Saturday night, 5:00 Pacific time right after the Heisman presentation. We couldn't ask for a better time slot.

Couldn't ask for two better teams. Boise state, a storied football program one of the best programs out of the Power 4 out there. In the playoffs last year, Ashton Jeanty, top five draft pick last year as well to the Raiders, having a very solid rookie season.

So we're going to have some players in this game as well.

We've got Washington, 8-4, very solid program. They're in a Power 4 conference, and three of their losses, one of them to Oregon, Ohio State, No. 1 team in the nation, Oregon No. 1 at one point as well over the last two years, and Michigan.

It's going to be a great game. I'm looking forward to it tomorrow night here at SoFi Stadium.



Q. Just this being reported as the final game of this series, how do you -- what are some of the memories that you can think of that really stand out to you as far as the significance of this game?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: So far it is the final year of this game. It might be extended, we don't know. We're not really focused on that. We're just focused on putting on the best show that we can possibly put on tomorrow.

My best memories from this, I would say, was year one when Boise State was in the game and I raced their dog, Blitz, at halftime. I was one of the only human beings to ever beat Blitz as well.

I sung the national anthem that year as well. Last year we did the pushup contest, all the fun activities that gets the crowd involved as well, gets the fans involved.

Those are the great memories, and seeing the guys' winning teams, how happy they are that they have a successful season and won this bowl game. They're all proud out there on the field. And just to give the championship belts to the MVPs of the offensive and defensive side of the football game of that team, of that member.

So those are always great memories to see all that action get played out.

Q. You mentioned Blitz. There's rumors you're going to have a rematch. Some folks in Boise thought you may have cheated. Did you have food treats in your pocket or something?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Actually I didn't cheat, but I was planning on cheating. I'm like Arizona State, you know -- or Michigan, right? They were stealing signs last couple years or something. Yeah. Wow, this is getting aggressive up here now.

I had steak in my pocket and I was going to throw it to him so he slowed down, but I didn't need to because he got distracted already so I didn't have to throw the steak. So I was planning on cheating, but I didn't have to cheat. I was



prepared. When you're prepared, that's how you win.

I figured out actually about an hour ago why I won because Blitz, he gets the tee off of every kickoff. When he grabs the tee, he has to bring it to the sideline. We put the tee out there for him, and I didn't know this, because he had to go to the tee and run back. That's what we had to do.

So when he grabbed the tee he went to the sideline instead of racing back, and that's how I beat him. Just got to be prepared.

Q. So rematch tomorrow?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Rematch is tomorrow. This is Blitz's final race. This is Blitz's final race. I love dogs. I'm a dog guy. I have a dog. I'm for the dogs, so I might let him just win. He should go off with a victory. I'm Speedy Gonzalez right now, so I might just tune it down a little bit.

Q. Earlier this week Jedd Fisch told us the story about you catching the football dropped from the helicopter. Can you tell us about that as well as your relationship with Coach Fisch?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: I've got a good relationship with Coach Jedd Fisch. It was unfortunate he left University of Arizona and went to the Washington Huskies, but understandable. I've done swaps in my lifetime before and understand what's best for your family.

I'm going to give him some garbage for it. You've got to. You've got to bust his chops a little bit. When he was at the University of Arizona he did a great job turning that program around. He went through some tough years. He came in there. I think he only won one game his first year; just taking a program over like that is very tough. He's turned it around, had a couple more wins. I'm pretty sure it was 9-3, and then beat Oklahoma in the bowl game his last season there and went 10-3. It was a very solid year. It was one of the best seasons in Arizona history.

He was bringing players back. It was the first time I went back in 10 years when Jedd Fisch got the head coaching job. He was doing cool things that players at that age enjoy, that college players enjoy. He had me come back, and we were dropping the football out of a helicopter and I caught the longest pass in history of elevation. You know, a helicopter -- I forgot how many feet up in the air it was -- and caught the pass, and we broke the Guinness world record.

It was cool. All the players were out there. Everybody went ham when I did it. It took six attempts as well. It was tough. I've actually got to give more credit to punt

returners now after doing that catch out of the helicopter.

That's what Jedd does. He brings the fun to the table. He knows what the players want, and that's why he has success as well in the college football era.

Q. Just curious, with Brady in town on Sunday calling the Rams-Lions game, have you linked up with him? Are you inviting him to this game?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Yes. He's got a busy schedule. The guy prepares a lot. See, I'm a guy, I just go on the fly with my commentating skills. Like Tom has to prepare every second. That's just how he was as a player as well.

So he probably won't have time to be able to come to the bowl game tomorrow. I hear that he's going to be here shooting a little commercial as well before the game, so we're going to link up before that, and then we're also going to link up on Sunday as well, because every Sunday, when he has the game in L.A., he has to come into the studio as well and come on our show, the Fox Pregame Show.

That's going to be fun as well because he's done it already once or twice this year. He's coming back into studio. He'll be at our desk. He'll be on a couple segments. We always have a blast. We bust each other's chops on air. That's what makes it special, going from teammates on the football field now to teammates off the field as well.

While he's here tomorrow shooting his gig that he has, hopefully we get a couple pictures with the Bucked Up LA Bowl signs behind us and everything. He makes me proud, and he'll support anything that he can possibly support for me as well.

But coming to the game, he's got a lot on his plate.

Q. I guess, Gronk, while we've got you, any predictions for the game tomorrow?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Dang, I haven't even thought about that yet. Washington's very solid team. I like Boise State, though. Their head coach is actually my age. We graduated in the same class when we graduated from high school, 2007.

Jedd left the University of Arizona, so I'm going to go against Jedd for that reason. I'm going with the Boise State Broncos. I think they're going to win by three points, by just a field goal tomorrow. They've got to redeem themselves. They lost to UCLA two years ago when we should have won that game.

I think Spencer and the Boise State Broncos are going to be prepared. They're going to win this game 27-24. That's why I'm an analyst right there. That's how I predict my games, because Jedd betrayed us at Arizona, so I'm going with Boise State.

Makes sense. You've got to find a niche like that. There he is, Jedd. Oh, my gosh, he's mad at me right now. I hooked you up, then I threw a dig after.

JEDD FISCH: You've already done that once. I saw that one time. You did it again?

THE MODERATOR: Coach Fisch, do you have any opening remarks?

JEDD FISCH: First of all, I just want to thank you and thank the bowl group for a fantastic experience so far. I know our guys had a great time last night at Cosm. It was a super cool opportunity. I see your dad is here.

It's great to be a part of Rob's bowl game obviously. All the respect in the world for Gronk and everything he's done. Everything Rob's done for pro football, everything he's done for football itself, we've looked up to him and really tried to make our program one in which that mirrors a lot of the things that he stands for, which is energy, enthusiasm, and passion for the game, but also unbelievable ability and an unbelievable player.

That's what we're trying to do. Then a great person.

So being in this LA Bowl, being here representing both the old Pac-12 and now the new Big Ten that we're a part of is super cool for us, and we're very appreciative of this opportunity to play here at SoFi.

SPENCER DANIELSON: Appreciate you guys' time as always. Appreciate you, Jesus, just to have an opportunity to coach this team and have an impact.

We were here two years ago. I was messing with Gronk on the field. He's like Benjamin Button. He gets younger every single day. That's a huge testament to him. Just fired up to be here. That's right, no different, man.

Our team has just been really fired up to get here. We've been through a lot this season. Love our team. Proud of what they've been through.

Obviously we played in the championship game last week. It was a quick turnaround, but the bowl's been awesome. Getting down here, like Coach Fisch talked about, has been great, and now excited to go cut it loose playing against one of the best teams in the country in

Washington. Coach Fisch has done a phenomenal job with his team. They got great players, well coached.

It's going to be a big time matchup Saturday night, and the nation should be watching. So we're just excited to go out there and let 'er rip.

Q. Coach Fisch, how nostalgic is it knowing that you're coaching in a game that your former player who you recruited, developed, you watched him grow up in Gronk? Has that sunk in for you yet?

JEDD FISCH: Well, I didn't get to recruit him or coach him when we were at Arizona obviously. He was there before I was there. Then when I went to New England he was not there at that point.

But I've looked up to him. It's exciting to be here. It's cool to be a part of the game. Our players are excited about being here at SoFi. The fact that we can play here, this stadium was being built when I was coaching for the Rams. It opened up the year I left the Rams. We played here twice when I was at the Patriots, both against the Chargers and the Rams.

So it's cool to be able to take our team to play in this stadium in this game on this field, and obviously against a great Boise team that we know we've got to be at our best.

Q. Spencer, just what would a win -- and everyone says bowl games mean a lot to propel you into the off-season, but given what you guys have dealt with this year, to get a 10th win and end the season with some momentum, what would that mean to this program?

SPENCER DANIELSON: It's huge. We talk a lot. We're no different than every other program around. You want to win your conference championship and want to win your bowl game. That's our goal. We haven't done that at Boise State since 2017. It's been a long time.

We've been blessed to win three championships in a row but have not won the bowl game. That's a big deal for both teams. You always want to win your last game as momentum going into the off-season, and you want to do it for your seniors.

We have a great group of seniors. I know Coach Fisch has a great group of seniors. You want to finish it the right way and put a completion stamp on the season. That's what we're working hard to do.

Q. Coach Fisch, obviously the ebbs and flows of the season, having your commitment to this program, and



obviously sometimes your name comes up in coaching vacancies, how do you continue to stay focused and also keep your players focused enough where you know what the mission is at hand and not listen to too much outside noise?

JEDD FISCH: We spent a lot of time just talking about what this season looks like and what we can accomplish here getting our ninth win.

Taking over a program a year ago that was really we only had one returning starter, and getting to a bowl game last year we really felt like we wanted to get progress this year.

Get to being 8-4 in the Big Ten, being able to be 3-2 on the road, and then be able to be in a position where now we're playing our ninth game back here.

We haven't spent any time focused in on what people are saying out in the outside noise regarding me or other coaches on our staff. We know that that's the world we're in right now. We know our players are being talked about or talked to from other teams, and we just have to really stay focused on the task at hand, which is the game tomorrow.

Q. Coach Fisch, there's been a lot of chatter about these group of 5 teams, that they may not belong in some of the bigger bowl games and the College Football Playoff. As someone who's coached against a few teams in your time, I was curious what your take is on that, and how big the gap really is between Power 4 teams and the group of 5?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: You want me to give a bunch of locker room material right now for Coach Danielson?

SPENCER DANIELSON: Oh, boy. It's certainly always changing, and we've all seen what it looks like really on a weekly basis. You look at games like USF going into Gainesville and winning the game against Florida. You look at teams constantly going back and forth; the fact that Washington State went across the country and then had a field goal game against Ole Miss. Had a game against Virginia that went down to the very last second with a two-point play.

You look across the country in the Mountain West, how good of programs they are.

But with this situation, with the playoffs, with Tulane, with James Madison, I haven't played those teams so I would have no idea how good they are. Our goal is to get to the playoffs, so that's our plan. Our plan is to get there next year, and whomever we play, we'll be ready for them.

Q. Coach Fisch, offense and defense, what do you think you do best on either side of the ball?

JEDD FISCH: Offensively, I think we've done a really nice job of having balance. We certainly, we have some really good runners. It's good that they're all healthy and ready to go. When we have our receivers ready to go, which they will be tomorrow, it gives us pretty good ability to air it out as well, and our quarterback is somebody that's physically able to run and throw.

Offensively we're pretty balanced. I think we do a good job there in situational football. Defensively, we've really gotten to a point that we've been really good against the run. I think over the last -- and really good in scoring defense. There hasn't been a team -- I think 26 points is the most we've given up all year in a game, and that was this past week in a game against Oregon, where it was 26-14.

I think our guys do a really nice job rallying to the ball, but we also play the most amount of freshmen, so I never know what it's going to look like on a Saturday.

Q. Jedd, on early signing day you said you expected to be here in 2026. Is that still your expectation considering everything that's happened in the last couple days?

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I expect to be here, yes.

Q. Spencer, this is for you. I know you're all about the process, and just reflecting back to the last time you were sitting in that seat a couple years ago, how much has your process changed? How much more confident are you in what you do? That was just such a whirlwind of a situation last time you inherited it.

SPENCER DANIELSON: Even walking out to SoFi today to do the team photo and stuff, flooded with a lot of emotions from two years ago. Two years ago I was named the head coach a week earlier and just figuring a lot of stuff out.

I think even here two years later, I'm learning and growing every single day. I'll make mistakes tonight that I'm going to have to learn from and learn as a coach and a leader. So learning a lot, but I want to be someone that's always learning and growing to be the best version of myself.

Coming back here two years later with different faces, different coaches, but our seniors were here two years ago. Seeing all they've been through, some injuries, some ups and downs. Just so proud of them, so proud of them



battling and proud of our staff and just the things we've been through and where we're at.

Kind of long answer to your question: we've learned a lot and excited to keep learning.

Q. Last year you guys had the Sun Bowl and you talked a lot about it being a foundational point for you guys going into the season. What do you think your team took from that experience last year, and what do you hope they take from this experience this year?

JEDD FISCH: You've got to teach your team how to win in the bowl games. You've got to treat every bowl game like a championship opportunity. If they're keeping score and there's a trophy or a belt, or both --

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Yeah, both.

JEDD FISCH: -- you've got to be able to compete for that. For us, what we look for is we say there's always something you can learn from championship opportunities. When you have -- this is the last game, and I think our guys did a really good job from last season to this season of improving.

That was Demond's second ever start was our bowl game, and now we're looking at his 15th start. So he's really grown, but he's also only 19 and he's a true sophomore. So these championship opportunities, especially in a stadium like this, especially with the fact that it's right after the Heisman, so there's going to be a ton of eyes on him.

I think this is a great opportunity for him to be able to lead our team and really for the rest of our players to really be able to use last year's Sun Bowl experience and now against a new opponent, see how good we can play this year.

Q. Spencer, it's the third time I think I asked you this week. Any update or clarity on opt-outs or injuries that you're willing to share?

SPENCER DANIELSON: I talked to Kage Casey, and he decided not to play in the game. It's something we worked through. We love Kage. He's a Bronco forever. He prayed on it, and he felt his time had come to the end and is going to focus on the NFL. We love Kage and wish him nothing but the best, but this week we been just focused on our team these guys and finish what we started.

Q. Coach Fisch, same thing. Any updates on injuries or opt-outs? Also if you're going to have one of your guys attempt to break Gronk's record for highest catch, which one of you guys on your team would you

want out there?

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Yeah, that was cool. Jedd does a great job of bringing to the table what these college football kids want to see and the fun to the game. We broke the Guinness World Record doing that. I talked about it a little bit before you came out here.

I think someone went and broke it, though.

JEDD FISCH: They tried to.

ROB GRONKOWSKI: I think it was someone from Australia, so that don't even count.

JEDD FISCH: Guinness Book of American Records.

ROB GRONKOWSKI: We're American records here.

JEDD FISCH: No, we have no opt-outs in the game. Everyone is playing. In terms of injuries, we've had no injuries that have occurred this week. Isaiah Ward's back. I'm trying to think, is there anybody that I can't -- I think everybody should be good to go that could go.

I mean, if they didn't play against Oregon, they're most likely -- I think the only other guy would be Tacario Davis, where he has practiced this week. So I think we should be in a good spot. We'll have to work him out before the game. We don't want to take any risks there, especially with a chance that he'll -- you know, the Senior Bowl, the combine, the fact that he's going to be such a highly drafted kid, we've got to make sure that he's healthy and we don't want to set him back.

Q. (No microphone.)

JEDD FISCH: You know, it was not a current player. It was not a current player. It was the best player that played at U of A. I'd have to then go back and think who's the best player to play at UW, and I'm not ready to make that declaration just yet.

We'll do some research. Every now and then, like you have to take something that you've done somewhere and leave it there. I think it's cool that we did it. I think it's really special that we got Rob to do it with us and really special to be able to create what we created, and I wouldn't want to take that idea and bring it to Washington.

That was an Arizona thing that we did when we were there. We'll try to come up with something cool at Washington that's totally different.

ROB GRONKOWSKI: That's a good point actually, yeah.



That's a U of A thing. I understand. It's like the Tom Brady Roast. You can't do another roast, you know.

JEDD FISCH: That's exactly right.

ROB GRONKOWSKI: Exactly. That was here in L.A. That's how I thought about that.

Q. You guys have tried to get ready this week. We talked to Ryan Walters at the start of the week and he was connected to the Tennessee opening there because he has a relationship with those coaches. You've been overwhelmingly connected to the Michigan job because of your connection. Are these unwanted distractions, or how do you react to all that?

JEDD FISCH: I don't think we can control it, to be honest. Unless the calendar changes or the rules change and make it more like the NFL where contracts are bound to the team, and then the team would have to give permission for them to leave and you'd never see coaches going to other programs in the NFL and in college, and those happen at the end of the season when the coordinators switch programs.

In college we don't have the ability to control that because the rules are the rules, and they are able to reach out to different people.

You know, it's not a distraction that I'm talking about. It's not something that we're focused in on. We're focused in on winning the game on Saturday. We're focused in on keeping this team together. We're focused in on playing great football. All I can do is control what I can control, and that's keep coaching.

Q. For both coaches, obviously the game practice, finished out the season, it was great. But being in Inglewood, how has how you guys approach recruiting this week been huge, especially with the second signing day coming up in a couple months?

SPENCER DANIELSON: I'm sure Coach Fisch is the same. We recruit Southern California a lot. Our roster right now is probably close to 50 percent of kids, Southern California kids. More than anything, it's an awesome opportunity for their families, their friends to watch us play a big time game in SoFi. So that's been a huge benefit for our guys.

And then, yeah, this is an area we recruit a lot, so it would be really cool for recruits to watch and see it and be able to play big time games on the West Coast.

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, same situation. And because we're

in a dead period, we can't see them right now but they can watch us. We hope they're tuned in. We hope they come to the game, see us live. See us live play. What a great environment.

Like how cool is it if you're being recruited by either program or both programs to be able to come to the game, watch the teams play live, two West Coast teams that they maybe can't get up to all the time.

We hope that all the Southern California high school kids come out to the game.

Q. How are the players feeling about playing inside SoFi Stadium for the first time?

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, my guys are fired up. We did a whole thing on you're walking on the grass -- I told our guys, like you're walking on the same grass that on Monday night there was an overtime game that the Chargers played the Eagles.

On Sunday there's going to be a game between the Lions and the Rams, which is two of the best teams in the NFL.

You have an opportunity to play where those guys are playing and where you dream of playing, and to be a part of Gronk's game, and we know that he'll have a chance on TV the next day on Sunday to be able to talk about his game, and that means a ton for our kids.

So our kids have a chance to be in an NFL stadium, which they've all dreamt of since they were a kid, and this looks like the best one in the country.

SPENCER DANIELSON: Very similar. If I ask all 108 of our players who wants to play in the NFL, every single one of them are raising their hand, right? Just being able to be in that environment. Some of them were here a few years ago, some of them weren't. Sire Gaines is a redshirt freshman running back of ours, and I remember he signed a couple days before we played this game. He was watching the game two years ago. Not a part of our team yet, just got signed, and now he's a huge part of this family.

It's really cool to have these moments with guys that have been here, some who haven't, but it's an awesome experience. Every time I walk in SoFi, it takes your breath away.

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