2009 Brut Sun Bowl Coaches Press Conference

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Head Coaches Press Conference with Stanford Head Coach Jim Harbaugh and Oklahoma Head Coach Bob Stoops

Jim Harbaugh - Stanford head coach

Coming to El Paso

"Well everything has been as advertised, better than advertised really. My son Jay was down here with Oregon State and gave high reviews. From that aspect, from the time we were welcomed off the plane, to how we've been treated by all of the Sun Bowl personnel and everywhere we've been has been better than advertised."

Preparations are going well but we've still got more work to do. Dynamics of the Sun Bowl since it is considered one of the best matchups

"There's a lot of dynamics but that one (Gerhart versus Oklahoma defense) specifically is going to be tough for us. Oklahoma is as solid a football team that we've played - there are no weak spots. When you start talking about our run game versus their run defense it's quite apparent to us that this is a game where we're going to out scheme our opponent. Their first two, three steps into the gaps are very, very explosive. Very impressive front seven."

Do you feel play action will become important in this game?

"As we've looked at it we're going to have to play our best game of the season. There's no way to fall back on out scheming, out finessing, out tricking; it's going to have to be, really, our best game of the season in terms of how we fit in the run game, how we pass protect, how we run routes, how we get out of breaks (and) where we throw the ball. The location is going to be critical, it's a ball-hawking defense they're very opportunistic. They just do everything right defensively."

Is Luck definitely out and if he is, does it change offense?

"No it doesn't change our offense or what we do. We have a lot of confidence in Tavita Pritchard and total confidence and trust in the ways he is going to perform and play. It hasn't changed our approach at all. We'll find out on Andrew; he's getting the pins out today (Dec.28). We'll see what he can do this Thursday."

Where are the pins?

It's in his right hand.

Why did you and Bob Stoops become coaches? Was it because of your fathers?

"I think the reason it happened in our family is because of our dad Jack Harbaugh. Coach (Bob) Stoops would probably say the same thing. We respected our dads so much and watched them every day and watch how they lived their lives. There's just something obviously there that we wanted to emulate. Even after a lot of tough losses and times he (Jack Harbaugh) would just come home and go straight to his room and we wouldn't see him till the next day, but somehow he woke up with a smile the next day and attacked each day with an enthusiasm unknown to man. (There was) something about his life that we wanted to emulate."

What has been your blueprint for success?

"Try to do as many things right as we possibly can as it relates to building a hard-nosed, tough football team. Being about the team, number one, first and foremost. The team, the team, the team. Having each other's back. If there is one thing one man can give another man; it's having his back. There's thousands of little things, all the things that most people don't think are significant are really the things that add up to make all the difference in the end."

What goes into being successful going into a bowl game?

"I really don't consider myself an expert, at all, in that regard. We're the guys trying to research it. We're trying to implement a plan and put that on the line on Thursday and see if we know what the heck we're doing or not. When you're a player you're just going things day by day. To us this is our most important game of the season and we hope we play up to that level."

Thoughts on the defense this year

"The production hasn't been what we want. We haven't been a dominant defense, we have not fought the way we want to fight on defense and play with the confidence that we'd like to consistently. That's definitely an area that we have to

play better, we have to shore up."

Having wins over USC and Oregon, is you team built for this kind of challenge?

"We'll find out. We're going to have to play with great hustle. We've got to play physical. This is physical team we're playing against; we have to rise up to that level. There's a ton of challenges on a lot of levels playing the Oklahoma Sooners. Our guys, I don't anticipate that they'll be intimidated in any way and they'll be ready to kick it off. We'll be able to tell a lot early in this football game."

How has Toby Gerhart been able to do so many things at a high level?

"I have no idea. He is really wired with some gifts of God. God really blessed him in so many ways. ... He carries himself in this very humble manner. I think deep down he knows he's a stud, he knows what he brings to our football team but you never hear him say it. He always shows and talks about his teammates. He is the real deal as a person, a student and as an athlete."

How much influence did Bo Schembechler have on you?

"Like a second dad; giant of a man as a person and as a coach. He's done so many things for thousands of players that played under him and hundreds of the coaches that played under him. A footprint was left by Bo Schembechler that few men that have walked this Earth have done."

Close losses, what does it tell you about your team?

"You know I never thought of it that way. I mean, I know we got four losses and there were a couple we shoulda, coulda won; that stuff but we didn't. We try to learn as much as we can from them and improve the things that caused us to lose those games and take the positives and build on those. All of those things have gone into who we are right now. Going forward after Thursday, we're only going to be as good as the game that we played in the Sun Bowl. It's all or nothing, we're ready to roll the dice on that."

Take the next step?

"One thing was eliminate some of the self doubt the team had the prior years; the negative thoughts. Play with more confidence and eliminate the negative, what's going to happen kind of stuff. Play in the moment. It took a lot of work to get there, a lot of practice and work by the players. They deserve all the credit."

Bob Stoops - Oklahoma head coach

Coming to El Paso

"As Jim (Harbaugh) had said, I agree, the people here, the hospitality; from getting on the plane to everything we've done has been outstanding. Everything working wise has been really excellent."

Opening thoughts

"I feel great about the way our players have been meeting and practicing. (We're) looking forward to the challenge of playing an excellent Stanford team (and) a guy that's arguably the best player in the country in Toby Gerhart. The physical nature that they play it's very recognizable with our players. They see it and see what a challenge it is to go against their offense. We'll have to play our best game in order to win. With our situation, the way it's been with all the juggling of our offensive line; it'll be challenging. Defensively; same thing."

"A team that goes to USC and wins 55-21, beats the Pac-10 champions in Oregon; there's a lot there that we recognize what an excellent football team they are and what a big challenge it is for us."

Trent Williams moving from left tackle to center

"It is a challenge. Let's face it, it's different. You're in the middle of the line. If there is a guy capable of handling it well, it would be Trent.

Not a popular topic is your three straight bowl losses, five of the last six. Have you found a common thread?

Sure, you're playing other really good teams. Florida wasn't any slouch last year. In the end when you're playing other championship teams, if you're not playing your best and or they're hot or make a play or two you don't you're going to lose. That's how it's going to be this year."

The month off, is it a different animal?

"They are, but they are for everyone. It's the same for all us."

Special team been better, is it individuals or other aspects?

"I think it begins with the kickers. It's made a big difference and in our last game against Oklahoma State it was a major factor. We, overall as a team, have covered better and we're going to need to. (Chris) Owusu is a special, special return guy. That's going to be a big, big factor is being able to get to him (Chris Owusu). I think overall the kickers have been better."

Will senior Demarcus Granger be able to play, is it realistic?

"It's realistic. He was in yesterday (Monday) in our goaline period and did well. I don't think it's fair that he'd be able to play a large number of snaps but he's a strong, physical guy that can help us where we need it. He has a chance to help us."

How remarkable is it for Granger to keep digging and trying despite people tell him no

"We were always hopeful at some point. He had a damaged nerve that fed down into his foot that little by little is coming back and regenerating. He's at a point where he's feeling better. He took a period of time off out of the year to allow that to heal more. He's missed our last couple of bowl games."

When did you know you'd coach?

"I always felt I would. In fact people always ask me what I'd do if I wasn't coaching; I'd be coaching. I don't know anything else I would do. In the end I just couldn't see myself not being in a competitive situation, not being involved with players and being around other coaches. When you're really passionate and love what you do it's like you're not working. That's

how my dad thought about it. It's a special way to live."