

WATCH: Video, Transcript From Rose Bowl Joint Presser With Ohio State's Urban Meyer, Washington's Chris Petersen



LOS ANGELES — Approaching the 24-hour window until kickoff, Ohio State's Urban Meyer and Washington's Chris Petersen met the media Monday at the Residence Inn LA Live for the Rose Bowl's joint press conference with both head coaches, conducting availability one more time before the No. 6 Buckeyes (12-1) face the No. 9 Huskies (10-3). Ahead of the 5 p.m. ET start Tuesday on ABC at Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, Calif., what else did Meyer and Petersen have to share?

Urban Meyer, Chris Petersen

URBAN MEYER: Thank you. Honored to be here and represent the Big Ten Conference and the great state of Ohio. Coach Petersen and I have been friends a long time. I've admired his programs to the point that I've actually visited him when he was at Boise State.

I've often told the story — I'm not sure if I told Chris this, that in 2006 I was at Florida playing Ohio State, ironically, for the national title, and they were playing Oklahoma a few days before us. I was trying to get some sleep, and that's when they did the hook and ladder and the statue. Shelley punched me in the side and said: Why don't you be creative like Chris and run plays like that? I still hold that against Chris.

We're honored to be here at the Rose Bowl. Committee and the hospitality of Los Angeles has been awesome, and we hope to perform well and make the "The Granddaddy of Them All" the most watched bowl game of the season.

CHRIS PETERSEN: This has been an awesome week. This has been something that I think our staff, a lot of people from the state of Washington have been longing to come back here.

And after the week of being here, you can see why. First-class operation. Going to play an elite team. It is kind of ironic being here with Urban, going back with him and some of the notes we've compared and

shared. And you always want to play in something like this, and sometimes you end up and it's like you're playing a game you thought about all along and you look and say: It's going to be against him?

We're honored. We're proud of our team, how they've battled. Been through a lot of different things. Hasn't been easy, but it never is. And we're excited to be here and play a great Ohio State team for sure.

Q. Urban, obviously this is your last go-around. You've never coached in this game. What has this experience been like for you; and is this a fitting end to you, this bowl game?

URBAN MEYER: I don't want to devalue the experience, but we're here to win a football game. And the best part of doing a bowl experience is to do your very best to go win and winning it. We've been working hard on that, realizing who we're playing, how good they are.

So it's been a great experience, and this has been a bucket list item since I started coaching. Been close several times, including when I was a GA at Ohio State back in '86. We came very close to coming to the Rose Bowl.

Throughout my head coaching career, we had opportunities that I thought we were — actually thought we were going, and then we ended up going to another bowl game.

So I can't imagine a better opportunity, better bowl game to go play. But we try and avoid that at all costs because any distraction other than getting ready to play is not — we're not going to allow that. And that's get ready to go play this game.

Q. Urban, we've asked the players a bunch of times do they get nervous before games, but I don't think I've ever asked you. Do you get nervous for games, and does tomorrow and what it means make it any different for you?

URBAN MEYER: I don't think nervous is a strong enough term before a game. Deathly ill might be more appropriate. Yeah, you get very nervous. And once again, it's not about the coaches; it's about the player.

Everything we do — really we call it the 48-hour rule. Everything we do up until game time is to make sure they're not in that — but I don't want to speak for Chris, but we've actually talked about this over the years, and absolutely, you just — what runs through a coach's mind is every scenario that happens. It's not fair to that player not to be prepared when that hits.

Some people say, well, they just have to shoot from the hip. We don't believe in that. We try putting them in those many positions as we can so when it hits they know how to react. Nervous is probably not a strong enough word.

Q. Urban, you were inside the Rose Bowl yesterday for the first time, I presume, ever. What was that like for you? I know you've told the story of being kicked out before.

URBAN MEYER: I had to ask to go in because I've never been in to see it. Back in the '90s, I can't remember what year, I drove by and stopped, and I used to recruit out here all the time. I stopped and I was going to try to sneak peek inside because I've heard about it for so many years and watched it. I was told to leave. And the guy was really rude, too. But it was awesome.

I wasn't able to completely see the mountains, but I'm sure we'll see that. I keep hearing that. Tomorrow.

Q. Urban, I know that this is an important time for your team and for you, personally. It's also a pretty big transitional period in terms of the program. How has Ryan Day handled this, and how do you see people reacting to him? Are people different with him? Is he kind of changing into the head coach persona you might see? What's this transition been like?

URBAN MEYER: Couldn't be better. Recruiting, Ryan and the staff absolutely did exceptional on signing day. We didn't have the numbers but the quality of players that we signed was I know top two or three in America. I know there were a couple at the end, but we also got a couple at the end. I thought it's been phenomenal.

Bop Stoops is a great friend, and we actually talked about this. I can't imagine it's not every coach's dream to hand it off to someone that you really believe can make it stronger and not a bunch of people lose their jobs, and the foundation is so strong at Ohio State, the culture is so strong that — and it certainly wasn't me; it was all of us. And everyone's in place.

And Ryan's going to do exceptional. He's an elite coach. And I think he's handled the transition — just ask our players. It's been awesome. And I can't wait to see what it does.

Q. Urban, Ezekiel Elliott and Joey Bosa opted to play, obviously, in 2015, the bowl game, even though everybody knew they were leaving. I'm wondering with Dre'Mont and Mike Weber opting to play, does your admiration for them grow a little bit, I don't know, for want of another term?

URBAN MEYER: I think that's a touchy situation. It's also the players that leave early for the NFL Draft, you know, you'd like to see everybody play, but I've been involved in those conversations and I certainly understand it.

Denzel Ward, who he's like a family member, Nick Bosa is certainly a family member. And then you've got Dre'Mont, Mike Weber and others that made the decision to play.

I try to avoid that. I don't want to give my opinion because I don't want someone to say, well, you told us to do this. Same thing with leaving early. If you ask our opinion, then I try to talk to the general managers, et cetera, to try to make sure we give them good advice, not opinion.

And the same thing with playing, I avoid that. If they ask me this it's a family decision, we'll support you either way.

Q. You seemed to share a moment with J.K. Dobbins yesterday during the team photo. He seemed to break down a little bit maybe standing next to you. Are you going to miss that as much as anything else? And also, like you said, the feeling, the deathly ill feeling, before a game, don't you kind of get used to that?

URBAN MEYER: No, you don't get used to that. But I will miss the players, and the good thing is I think I'm still going to be in position at least to be around the players and hug them up and make sure that the focus that I've had really the last part of my career is making sure that these guys don't get used by the system; that there's opportunities for them after the game. And that's what I'm going to be able to spend a ton of time on that.

Q. Urban, you said legacy is important to you to a certain point. Maybe at the top of that list is 7-0 against Michigan. Talking to players about how you handle that, where did you learn, A, what's the key to that success, and how did you learn not to overemphasize it or underemphasize it, if you could speak to that?

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, that started — that's a great question. I'm glad you asked it. Because it means the world to us. Rivalry games, I hear people say that it's just a name, faceless opponent. And that's not the approach we've taken.

We worked that game 365 when I was the head coach at Bowling Green, we did it with the team up north called Toledo. When we went to Utah, we did it to the team down south to BYU. And then Florida you had three rivals, Georgia, Tennessee and Florida State. And then also Miami. So you had four at times.

And that's not a game we work; that's something that our players know and hear we work the game 365. We've already been working it out here. How do we do that? Follow recruiting, follow everything they do.

We take time out of the offseason and take time every spring practice, every practice we work on that. During the summer training camp, the Coach Mick calls it the Team Up North day. And then every day during training camp we work on it. That was the Woody Hayes mentality, and that's been everyone's mentality at Ohio State.

Q. Coach Petersen, you've spoken openly about changing your preparations this year versus the last couple of years. How do you think that's gone the last couple of weeks, and how do you think your players are handling getting ready for tomorrow?

CHRIS PETERSEN: We'll find out shortly. I think they practice really hard. Certainly back in Seattle, you know, we kind of just changed maybe the cycle of the practice schedule in terms of when we were going to go hard, when we were going to back off. So that was a little bit different.

But they practiced hard. They practiced well. And they're anxious to play.

Q. Coach Meyer, you referenced the hook and ladder. Is there a way to prepare for what he might bring? And Coach Pete, do you have a couple of those ready?

CHRIS PETERSEN: No.

URBAN MEYER: I'll let Chris answer first because I want to hear this.

CHRIS PETERSEN: No (laughter). We don't.

Q. No?

CHRIS PETERSEN: That's all I got.

URBAN MEYER: No, we've worked on quite a bit on special teams as well. We've been good on kicking team. Whenever a team has three weeks to prepare, and it's an excellent coach and coaching staff and great players, you've got to work on it all. And we have. And I've been the thorn in the side of the defensive staff this week.

Q. Coach Petersen, can you talk about your senior class and how special they've been to the University of Washington and to football fans in the Northwest?

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, they've been awesome. They've certainly helped change our program, the foundation. It's kind of interesting because I think one time there was like ten of those guys that played as true freshmen. I don't know if they're still all with us. Some guys might have went to the NFL early and all those things.

But they've just done it the way we've asked. And they've stayed really focused the whole time and they've been great kids and been awesome to be around.

It's really what you'd hope college football would be about. And I think we've as coaches gotten as much from those guys' enjoyment as hopefully they've got from us. And even if they haven't enjoyed it the whole time, I think that they'll reap the benefits of our preaching and harping on them on the things outside of football. Certainly along with the things of football that we've talked about for years now.

Q. Coach Meyer, in the month or so since you announced your intentions to retire, there's been a lot of talk about your legacy. And I know you're preparing for a game and recruiting for the next level, you were doing that for the next seasons. Have you given any thought to how you are going to be perceived as you're done? Do you consider that at all? And if not, how would you like to be remembered, I guess, as an Ohio State football coach?

URBAN MEYER: Just out of respect for our players and where we're at, I think that's inappropriate for me to even spend time thinking about that, because I've asked our players to shut it down. There's girlfriends, families, uncles, everybody coming out to visit right now; I've asked them to shut it down.

There's been talk forcing people like our quarterback to make decisions about the NFL, and I've asked him to just shut it down until after this game.

The question you asked — I'd be untruthful if I said it doesn't matter to me, because of course it does, and I think there will be an appropriate time to have those conversations. Certainly not the day of, the week of or the three weeks prior to the biggest game of this team's year.

So it does matter, but at the appropriate time. And that's certainly not now.

Q. Chris, how much of a challenge is this week, honestly, what Coach Meyer just talked about, with all the friends, family, parents, everyone coming down? How big of a circus, honestly, is this week to try and maintain and handle?

CHRIS PETERSEN: It's kind of the same it seems like every year. The first few days when you're on site, feel pretty good. I mean, I think the guys are excited to be here.

There's really not a ton of distractions going on. It's about last night, yesterday, when you really start to feel them, when the majority of the people show up, family, friends, and that can be really, really distracting to the guys. And that's where you get to the point, you're like: We just need to go play this game.

Q. Chris, but also for Urban as well: You guys are the same age. I think you have the two highest active winning percentages in college football. Where you are right now, to get to this point, to be as successful as you both are in these big-time programs, how much of it was luck; how much of it was circumstance? How much of it was hard work, the decisions you make of what you're going to do with your career? I know that's a great big question, but just here you are, and you guys have done really well. How did you do it?

CHRIS PETERSEN: I think it's all those things. I don't think it's any one thing. I think it obviously starts with a lot of hard work. But there's no question you've got to have some luck along the way. We're both at two awesome places with tremendous foundations, administrations. People that want to really help you win.

I mean, it doesn't matter how good of a coaching staff you have. If you don't have the support

underneath you to really help you do what you want to do — and that's the one thing I've learned throughout my career: You have to have a bunch of people around you that really are trying to make this thing as successful as you are.

You cannot do it with just a bunch of good players or really good administration and not good enough players. It has to be the whole thing. So I think it's all those things you spoke about.

Q. Chris, can you analyze the state of the Pac-12 right now? I know you went to the College Football Playoff a couple of years ago.

CHRIS PETERSEN: I don't know. There's been a lot of talk about all those things, and everybody's just trying to do the best they can and win the games. I think that's — the analyzing of where these conferences are, sometimes it's cyclical. And I don't think the coaches think that much about it. They're just trying to do the best they can with the team that's put in front of you, and put your best foot forward.

Q. For both of you. You both were in the College Football Playoff just two years ago and had a chance to meet up with each other in that national title game. And not only have you two not been back to the playoff, but the entire conferences for both of you guys have not been back to the playoff. Why do you think that is, and do you think there might be a systemic problem with the playoff that neither of your two conferences have been back in the past two years?

URBAN MEYER: I have strong opinions about all those things. I haven't had the time to really research it. And so I'm very cautious how I say those things.

And we and I try to live under the premise that BCD is blame, complain, and defend, and that's something we permeate through our program, is don't lose a game, then. It's very simple. You want to get to the playoff, don't lose a game.

Now, is there other problems on schedule strength, some teams play nine league games, some teams not, a variety of things. But certainly that's not a conversation within our team. It's really not a conversation anywhere — maybe our athletic director and I will in passing chat about it, but no one's ever really asked my opinion in that room, the committee room. I don't imagine they will.

I think they're faced with extremely tough decision. And we've been on the bubble every year. And one time we got in, in '14, and was it '16 we got in, and then the last two years we did not after winning our conference.

So we have very strong opinions but not educated enough about what goes on. I'd like them to review again what are the principles to get you in, what — is it that terrible loss? Which we've had some bad losses, and that's our fault. Don't lose a game, and you're in the playoff.

CHRIS PETERSEN: I agree. That's easier said than done. But when we're back at Boise, that's how it was. We just — for us to get — there was no playoffs then, but it was to get to a BCS game. And if you don't lose, we felt if you take care of your own business, it's going to work out how it's supposed to. And that's how we even said it. It's going to work out how it's supposed to, and it always did. It's a little harder to win all your games. It really is.

To have the kids having their A game every Saturday is really hard to do in the competitive environment that we all play in. And for those teams that can do it, then they need to go to that playoff, and then there's going to be some teams that are right there that are probably just as deserving and you gotta

make subjective decisions on who goes. And that can be hard.

Q. What would you describe — what moment would you describe as your highlight leading up to this bowl game?

URBAN MEYER: One moment? I think everybody knows the moment, that was in Columbus around Thanksgiving time, that big win, to see our players play at that level and the seriousness, the respect we have for the rival, our opponent.

I mean, it was an awesome week. And I had a good feeling about that game just because of the leadership on our team and to see those players play like that, that was without doubt the best moment.

Q. Do you have an update on Thayer Munford's status?

URBAN MEYER: That's a game-time decision.

Q. Chris, having played in this stadium this year versus UCLA, does that give you any insight at all, any advantage whatsoever in this game tomorrow? Does it mean anything tomorrow?

CHRIS PETERSEN: I don't think so. I think when you pack it with the passion that will be in there tomorrow and certainly the opponent you're playing, I mean, it feels like you're in a different place in a lot of different ways.

Q. Urban, Ohio State's 85-9 in your tenure, best program in the Big Ten. You won the national title. You know all the great things that have happened at Ohio State. But as we sit here today, Alabama and Clemson are getting ready to play for the third time in four years in the National Championship game. This isn't a playoff question about the losses or anything that kept you out, but as you get ready to hand this program over to Ryan Day, is there anything in the program that you think is, oh, we just need to be a little bit better at that to be at that Alabama/Clemson level? Or do you feel like, you know what, we are at that level; we're as good as those teams, we just haven't quite made the playoff lately?

URBAN MEYER: Ryan and I have spoke of that, what is the weaknesses of the program, because Ohio States and Washingtons, they hire coaches and give you the support to go do that. And I don't want to say we failed, because that's a really, really tough word. But we have. And you can't lose that one game.

Like Chris said, that is — go ahead. I told at the press conference with Ryan Day: Here's your job. You beat the rival. Every other game you have to win as well. Every player has to get drafted in the first two rounds. No off-the-field issues, and never lose to that rival. And, by the way, your classroom, you're dealing with 31 ACTs on the average. And I looked at him and I said: Go get it, tiger.

That's what it is. But that's — I tell our players, I think there's really good conversation, is that there's no one that forced Chris Petersen to go to Washington and those players, those great players that he has, they understand that.

Anytime I see someone like, man, this is — no, no, it's not, you made a choice to come here. This is a place of excellence. Well, we had a great year, 12-1. Yeah, but we missed the ultimate prize. That doesn't mean we make everything so miserable around there. We thank them because they really gave great effort. But we're not embarrassed to say that we are at one of those programs that should be there.

Q. Coach Petersen, you brought in a couple of former players from Washington this week for the Rose Bowl. What did that mean to you to have them talk to the team, and what did you

glean from them in their talk to the team?

CHRIS PETERSEN: There's some players down here. But we haven't had any of them talking to the team or anything like that. There's a function, I think, for some of the players that have played in the Rose Bowl and Husky legend-type situations.

Q. What does it mean to have all those players down here, all the former Huskies for this game?

CHRIS PETERSEN: I think it's great. I think there's some great former Ohio State players here. I mean, it's just — that's the nature of this bowl game. Both these programs grew up with this being the pinnacle of the season. And it's changed a little bit, a little bit with the playoff system now.

But if you're not going to be in that, what other bowl is there to be at? This is it. This is the history, the tradition, the respect that — this is what college football is all about.

Q. Urban, when you took this job seven years ago, you had won already two national championships, Ohio State was Ohio State. When you look back at your seven years here, are you happy with what the program has achieved? Has this experience been everything you wanted it to be?

URBAN MEYER: Once again, there will be a time to reflect. My initial response is absolutely. This was never a job; this was very personal, growing up a few hours from Ohio State, being a Buckeye as far back as I remember.

I operated every day with a little bit of sense of fear because I never want to let people down, including any former great players that I idolized growing up, the state that I love and will always love, and a university I've been passionate about since the day I — as far back as I can remember.

So it has not been perfect, but to say that we worked — you can't tap us on the shoulder say, boy, you just need to work a little bit harder or — and there's been some great success. But I'm very pleased.

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