

WATCH: Video, Transcript From Ohio State's Urban Meyer Previewing B1G Championship Game Vs. Northwestern



INDIANAPOLIS — Before the Big Ten Championship Game takes centerstage Saturday at Lucas Oil Stadium, an 8:17 p.m. kickoff on FOX, head coaches from both sides arrived Friday for walkthroughs and pregame press conferences to preview Northwestern vs. Ohio State.

Ahead of the No. 6 Buckeyes (11-1, 8-1) and the No. 21 Wildcats (8-4, 8-1), OSU head coach Urban Meyer discussed the upcoming matchup and answered questions about his future after he was mentioned in a report. Below is video and transcript from Meyer's portion.

Urban Meyer

Q. When you have a week with somebody like Wyatt Davis who is about to make his first start on this stage, does that person get more of your attention during the week or do you try to ignore some of that stuff?

URBAN MEYER: No, they get a lot of attention, more attention from their line coach obviously in Kevin Wilson being knee deep in that. I'm involved. But Wyatt is a guy that you heard us talking about him for quite a while. If this was a year ago, we'd have a problem. We're excited. He's earned playing time. We were trying to find a way without disrupting the cohesiveness of the offensive line, that's why we put him at tight end, tried to get him in the game. But he's ready to go.

Q. One of your former assistants, Scot Loeffler, was hired at Bowling Green yesterday. Your thoughts on that hire, why you think he might be able to be the guy to bring them back?

URBAN MEYER: I love Bowling Green, will always be a Falcon. I had great conversations with their athletic director. Scot is outstanding. He's an Ohio guy. That's going to be the key, is to energize that area, energize the Ohio players, as many as they can. I got a great feel for that one. I'm glad he got it.

Q. How fond are your memories of the 2001 Northwestern game? At that stage of your career, how important was that victory for you?

URBAN MEYER: It was a great one. I think we scored 29 points in the fourth quarter to win that game.

Went for two, scored right at the end of the game with no timeouts. Nice five, six, seven hour bus ride from Bowling Green, Ohio. Couple sandwiches on the way home, it was great. But that was our breakthrough. That was our 9/11 game that year. We were playing really well at the end. Just a great, great win over a dear friend of mine, Randy Walker. After that game, we became even closer. Just have great respect for Northwestern obviously and their coach. I just asked Pat, he was on that staff, so young, I thought he might be a player back then. Just great respect for Northwestern.

Q. There was a report out today saying that next year would be your last year. Do you care to comment on that? Any truth to it at all?

URBAN MEYER: No comment on that.

Q. Dwayne Haskins was named the Chicago Tribune's Silver Football award winner. How deserving is he of that? He says that he's only reached about 65, 70% of his ceiling, is what he says, in his estimation. What do you see down the road for him?

URBAN MEYER: I'm glad he said that because I agree. But his acceleration in the last really month has been exceptional. I will say one-third of playing quarterback is throwing the ball. The other two-thirds are a combination of toughness, of leadership, intelligence, all the other intangible values that that unique position has to have. I love that award. I think it's one of the great awards you can have. We've been fortunate with Braxton, J.T. and I believe Zeke. We've been fortunate to be well represented with that award. It's a great one. I know Dwayne is very honored, as are we. Q. Are you at the point of the year, I know you don't pay attention to the other candidates, where you think Dwayne could get to New York for the Heisman? URBAN MEYER: Zero attention to it. There's a time to talk about that. Not now.

Q. Linebackers played well last week.

URBAN MEYER: Very well.

Q. Baron Browning has had a role with the linebackers, times when he was out for a little bit. What has this season been like for him? Where is he right now?

URBAN MEYER: Exceptional talent. I thought he would be a little further advanced right now. We want to play him. He deserves to play. I anticipate he'll play a lot tomorrow.

Q. All season long you've had people reporting things, different things that have been distractions. How have you made sure that you've kept yourself focused and not allowed any of those things to affect your preparation?

URBAN MEYER: How have I?

Q. Yes.

URBAN MEYER: Just trying to do the job that we're all asked to do the best we can, so ... it hasn't been a distraction.

Q. From what you know about Dwayne's family, how have they helped him become the man and the player he is?

URBAN MEYER: Well, they've helped him become the man he is. That's the ultimate responsibility as a

parent. Boy, are they great parents. They have a beautiful daughter, Timea. She's awesome with what he does. She's an actress. They're very highly educated. They invest a lot of money in their children. They sent them to as good a school as you can, even moving their family so they could receive that education. My conversations with his mother and father have always been about academics and about how sometime this football gig is going to be over. I can't say enough about those people. I love them. They are family.

Q. I know you talked about Wyatt Davis a little bit earlier, but offensive line coming off probably its best game of the season last week against Michigan. How do you maintain that cohesion up front with a new face?

URBAN MEYER: Leaning on our veterans up there. Demetrius, that was a tough one. But he'll be playing right next to Isaiah and right in next to Michael Jordan. Those are veteran guys. The one thing, when the foot hits the ball, you're out there playing, there's no coaches around. Coaching becomes very overrated at that point. You rely on the leadership of those guys. He's around veteran players. The expectation level is not going to change. He's performed very well in practice.

Q. Can you tell during the week of practice, the last two weeks especially, progress by your defense that you think will carry over into Saturday night?

URBAN MEYER: At times you can, then other times you're shocked because you think your practice is great, it doesn't show up on the field. I'd say we're batting about 80% when I see them practice. The expectation level is very high. It usually becomes that, usually shows up. I have seen great progress. Obviously we took a significant backwards step against Maryland. Other than that, even though Nebraska wasn't perfect, it was a step in the right direction. Michigan State was a step in the right direction. Then a bad one. We gave some points in the fourth quarter, but I thought against the team up north, they kept a very talented team in check for most of the night.

Q. You have recruited a tremendous amount of speed over the years to this roster. You're playing a game indoors, they run the NFL combine on this. Are fast tracks a thing, can your team play faster indoors?

URBAN MEYER: We have some fast guys. It's no secret that that's one of our principles of offensive football, is get fast in space. That will be part of it tomorrow. We're playing a team that also believes in not allowing that to happen. I mean, that's about countless hours trying to figure out how to do that because they don't give up many big hits. You look at statistics, they just don't do that. They were also up 17-0 on our rivals, kept them in check. I think came back and won 20-17. We like fast tracks, but it's going to be a chess match and a challenge, a way to get our guys in space against this defense.

Q. Ryan Day is a guy that's come up for conversation in other jobs. How do you handle that as a head coach, talk to him about, nothing till after the game?

URBAN MEYER: Well, I've had a lot of experience with that. We've had a tremendous amount of guys to go on to become great head coaches. Ryan Day is elite. I've said that many, many times. There will be a time and a space. Certainly now is not that time, this week is not the time. But there will be a time.

Q. You talked earlier in the week about how unique the preparation is for your rivalry game. When you follow it up with this for a championship, is it tougher to move on physically or mentally to get ready after everything you poured into last Saturday?

URBAN MEYER: We've had a few years of experience with it. That's a great question. I remember when I was at Florida, we played Florida State right before the SEC Championship. Usually those are just chaos games. This one obviously every time we play our rival, the players you play against, the wear and tear. Our offensive line played 95 plays, 105 plays, then played their rival. We had to be very judicious on putting our kids in harm's way. We're trying to get a right guard ready to start for the first time. We'll find out how we did. Your question occupies a lot of time and thought.

Q. We've asked you versions of this question a million times. I'll ask it again. This Big Ten championship game, Oklahoma and Texas are playing each other in a championship game because the Big 12 doesn't have divisions, the Big Ten, the way you do it, two divisions, championship game like this, this format, this whole thing, what do you think of it?

URBAN MEYER: I congratulate the people in Indianapolis, in this championship game. It's over the top. When we jog out, first of all, the arena is incredible. It's a lifetime experience for our players, really our staff. I remember the first time I jogged in it in 2013. Incredible. What the Big Ten I shouldn't say has become, because that's not fair, but the Big Ten and this championship game, I think it's one of the faces of college football right now. We're honored to be a part of it. The people, Mr. Delany, all the people that work so hard for this, it's an awesome experience. I know the SEC and the Big 12, a lot of teams have these championship games, Pac-12. But I'd put ours against anybody.

Q. A few minutes ago Pat said he thinks some balance needs to be restored offense versus defense. Is there something that can be done with the rules to combat fast guys in space, and should there be?

URBAN MEYER: Rules to make the scores come down or something like that?

Q. Do you think the game is out of balance, and is there something that could be done?

URBAN MEYER: I'll be honest. You caught me off guard a little bit. I have no idea. We're going to try to get some first downs tomorrow and all that. I think right now there's some good thought to that, but it's also probably the most popular it's ever been. I know that's important to a lot of people. Coaches just try to win the game. I haven't really thought about that. I'm sorry.

Q. As you prepared this week, looked at your team, is there a position matchup or battle you think is especially important tomorrow?

URBAN MEYER: Oh, yeah. I'll start with the kicking game. That's a big part of it. They were very aggressive how they came after punts. I got asked many questions about the opening drive last week against our rival. They wanted to talk about the pass to Chris Olave. That was a guy running fast, dove in the end zone. I'd rather talk about our kickoff team that attacked an elite athlete for our rival, held him inside the 20 yard line, had a 22-yard punt return and our offense started on the midfield. That's how we try to operate. The matchup I see, number one, is the field position matchup, especially against the team. This team never has pass fumbles. That's why the matchup to me is going to be field position in this game. Most championship games it is.

Q. For people out there speculating that not only do you need to win but you need to put on a great show on Saturday night to have a chance in the College Football Playoff Selection Committee's thinking, how uncomfortable is that to deal with?

URBAN MEYER: I only deal with it when you ask me, so it's not uncomfortable. I can understand it, appreciate it. There's zero conversation in there about it.

Q. You said earlier this week you were going to be hard on your guys this week, you really wanted to push them hard because of how well they played against Michigan. Are you pleased with what you saw from your team in practice this week?

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, be hard on them, be fresh, be mentally prepared. I think we're there. Obviously the foot hits the ball tomorrow at 8:00, so we still have a lot of time. But I like where we're at.

Q. I want to make sure there are no new injuries, everyone is healthy? Is that true?

URBAN MEYER: Good to go.

Q. Northwestern, how Purdue has improved the last couple years, what are your thoughts on the Big Ten West, your outlook on their future?

URBAN MEYER: Obviously we have our overlap games, we've had some tough ones in the last few years. I like to use the 'R' word a lot, the respect factor. Once again, I apologize. Just don't spend much time thinking about it. It's week-to-week, week-to-week. It's hard for us to separate the East and West. Just get ready to play, find out who is healthy. I think there's some fine teams. I tell you what, the Nebraska coach, Nebraska team, you can see what's happening there. They're going to be very good. Obviously Purdue is outstanding. There's some very good teams over there.

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