

Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Michigan vs Iowa

Sunday, December 5, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Lucas Oil Stadium

Head Coach Jim Harbaugh

Aidan Hutchinson

Press Conference



was really hard after such an emotional win last week. I mean, that was just -- it was insane. But, you know, we had to refocus. It was honestly hard a little bit, you know, personally to get over that just because it was something that you've been thinking about for years. But as you can see, you know, we got our game plan, we focused on that. And, you know, we had a very dominant win today.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah. It would be the same answer, Brad. You know, like when did you know that this was going to be a special team? Or how did you know that they would refocus? And it's the same qualities -- I love this team. There's no team I love more than this team. But it's the same qualities. I think back to the USD team we had in 2005 and 2006 and the Stanford team in 2009, 2010 and the 49er team, '11, '12, and '13.

It's just the way they approach it. They give it their best every day. And then you just -- just that simple thing. Nobody ever thinks it's that simple, but it's that simple. There are a thousand other little things that go into it, but when you're around a group of guys and you watch them making sure that they give it their best, their very best, you know, every single day.

And Aidan did lead that. That was -- you know, from January you could see, you know, when he went into the weight coaches and said I'm coming back, and every time I step into this weight room, make sure you wring me out, get everything out of me. You could tell he was hungry. And the weight coaches said, yeah, this can be an all you can eat buffet in here. And he ate it up.

And I think that's contagious and others followed. But, yeah, this is who they are. They give it their very best every day.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, we -- we knew first of all Donovan Edwards, we had that play. That was ready for prime time. It's been ready for prime time about seven weeks. First put it in before he hurt his ankle. And then when he came

Michigan 42, Iowa 3

Q. (No microphone.)

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Yeah. I read a couple of those, a couple people in the crowd I remember, their predictions for what we got. Man, we defied all expectations. Nobody thought we could do this. Nobody thought we could ever do this, especially not this season. And, man, we did it. And we did it in a very dominant fashion.

Q. (No microphone.)

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Man, it's just so cool to have -- to see my teammates have my back like that and see them supporting me and doing all that, man. That was such a cool moment. And, man, it was so great just to see that and experience that.

Q. (No microphone.)

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Yeah. I really think it was a consistent belief, really, from week one. You know, we saw what we were about against Western Michigan. I knew we had something special off the jump so -- you know, really, the whole time, I knew we had something special.

Just the way we built the team, the foundation, the high energy throughout the whole off season. I mean, that doesn't amount to wins, but, you know, it amounts to the culture and the investment of the guys on the team.

Q. (No microphone.)

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Yeah. We all just refocused. It



back, started greasing it up again and knew that that one was going to work. We had it planned early.

As soon as we got into the left hash after the fourth play, we were going run that. And he's never missed on that throw. Sometimes he throws it off his left, his right foot. He's always on the move running when he throws it. And every time it's a dime.

And Roman did a great job tracking it down. And that was big. So we hit some big plays. Blake -- Blake's huge run in the first half. I don't think Iowa's had a run over -- against them over 30 yards, you know, all season. So that was big. I mean, they're -- the 9th ranked defense in the country.

And then second half, we went exclusively pretty much to check with mes at the line of scrimmage and felt like we knew when they were blitzing, what they were doing.

You know, great job by Josh Gattis. Great job by Mike MacDonald and the defensive staff. Great job by the offensive staff. Great job by the special teams. How about the blocked punt? I don't know how Cornelius Johnson was able to -- he didn't look like he was near position to block that punt. But somehow he contorted and got his left arm and hand in there to block that punt. But it was great complementary football once again by the Michigan Wolverines.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Oh, yeah, I could feel it. We all could. We talked about it last night. What more -- how much more can we pile into one game, the importance of one game.

It's a lot, yeah, the championship, chance to go to the playoffs. To walk past the sign we all walk by, "Those who stay will be champions." To make that valid and that true. You know, for guys to -- to live on, really, in Schembechler Hall forever. I mean, this picture is going to be up there on the All American wall. Every guy on the team in the team picture is going to be up there as part of Big 10 Champion. We've got a banner in Glick Fieldhouse that's going to say Big 10 Champion.

And, you know -- and, also, I knew that they would -- I just knew they would handle it because they give it their very best every single day whatever they're doing.

And so, you know, when the players -- when Aidan came to me -- and it was Aidan who came to me and wanted to dedicate this game to Tate Myre, you know, yes, let's do that. Let's -- let's do that. That was -- that was huge. And

then when it was 42 -- when it was 42 points and we all looked up there, we were like --

Q. Describe that.

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: God works in mysterious ways. Man, it's crazy.

JIM HARBAUGH: When you read all the accounts and talking to Coach Line at Oxford High School, Tate was a warrior, football player, wrestler, best athlete in the school. And, you know, best athlete in the school could have easily made it out of that school and been the first one out.

But you just know that he was -- while people were running away from that fire, he was running into it. And he's a hero. I'm glad that -- our players got soul too. They got big hearts. Credible guys led by this young man right here.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Can I just say one thing? On top of being great football players, they're even better people. And I've always felt that I've drawn the long straw here in being able to coach them. They're a joy to coach. They've been raised great by their parents. So I'm not taking any part of that credit.

But there's been zero distractions in Schembechler Hall, off the field. And that's going on, you know, three or four years now of no off-field incidents. Just guys that are -- of high character. Great football players, even better people.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: It was -- it was incredible. I mean, I give, you know, Ward -- Aidan came to me. I went to Ward. And, you know, they -- they put everything together. We just -- how could we honor him. How could we honor his memory.

You know, it's a community that needs all of our prayers, every one of them. And we just -- yeah, we wanted to offer that up. We wanted to offer our prayers. They're a community that desperately needs it and offer them up to the one who conquered death and also honor Tate Myre and his bravery, his courage.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Nobody's owed anything. Nobody's entitled to anything. But, as I said, when you're around a group of guys that attack everything the way they attack their school work, their practice, and they want to give it their very best, you got a good feeling it's going to happen.

But, you know, nobody's owed anything. And they did a tremendous job earning it and really proud of them.

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Yeah. That was obviously one of the goals going into the season, but there's no guarantees in life, no guarantees that you're going to win anything.

But as we got closer and closer to that Ohio State game, you know -- I mean, that was the big test for us I think. And I think when we beat them, we knew, you know, we can -- we're a really good football team, and we got a really good chance to win this next game because, you know, Ohio State was a really talented team.

But, yeah, I think just beating Ohio State just for everybody's mental for sure, everybody's minds, we overcame them and we were moving on to bigger and better things, you know.

JIM HARBAUGH: And part of the beauty of when you give it your very best, then you're proud of whatever you accomplish. And, you know, it's awesome that you accomplished a championship. But that's the beautiful thing about giving it your very best, whatever you do accomplish, you know, you feel good about.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, I've given you several already. Great group of guys, better -- great players, even better people. No distractions. They're great kids and great young men.

I call them my mighty men, mighty men and women of Michigan Football. That's what they are to me.

Why are they enjoyable on a daily basis? Because they've always got a smile on their face. They're always looking to get in. You know, they're not looking to get out of stuff. I don't have to talk them into things.

Sometimes I've got to pull them back, you know, because they've done too much. But, yeah, those -- you know, all those reasons.

And, you know, their mental is -- I'd argue that, you know, their mental health is great because they give it their very best every day. Therefore, they don't have guilt that they didn't give it their very best. They don't have regret that they didn't give it everything they had. I think a lot of people that don't give it their very best have guilt about that. They have regret. Not these guys.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIM HARBAUGH: It was not. It was not until it was actually up there. You know, until Moody kicked the extra point and we just -- it hit me when I was -- hey, Aidan. That's 42 up there.

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Goosebumps.

Q. (No microphone.)

AIDAN HUTCHINSON: Sure. Do it.

JIM HARBAUGH: Absolutely.

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Q. (No microphone.)

BLAKE CORUM: I think so. I mean, 42 to 3, you tell me. I think so.

Q. (No microphone.)

BLAKE CORUM: I saw a hole. I saw the corner try to crash down. I hit him with a jump cut. Then it was green grass. And I saw JJ come by me. I slowed down for him so he could get in front of me. I think he took out like two people. And it was over from that. It was a great play by JJ. That was awesome. I ain't never seen a quarterback do something like that.

Q. (No microphone.)

BLAKE CORUM: You know, I think just the commitment from both sources. You know, Coach Gattis and then us believing in him. You know, he committed to the run game early. In the interview, he said like last year he didn't really focus on the run game. But, you know, he's been a tremendous play caller. It has been great.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: So the beginning of the year, the odds -- I don't know, whatever it was, 2 percent likely we'd win the Big 10 Championship. That was preseason predictions. I don't know how it works out.

But, you know, we believe in each other. We believe in



ourselves. But, you know, there's always that little external motivation. So, you know, internally motivated, bring each guy along. But sometimes just some of the stuff that's out there, you just take it and ride with it and fuel to the fire. So that's where that was from.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: I think so. It's the framework for how a team should be, relational, giving everything you got for the guy beside you.

You know, the expectation for how the season goes is going to be high. But I think the framework, the expectation is more so how the team operates within itself, like the brotherhood, the family, the relationships.

And, I mean, it's been -- we've put on a clinic of that this year with our brotherhood, how we care about each other, how we play for each other. And obviously goals, like accomplishments, all that outside, I think the framework to accomplish all that is what I just talked about.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: I think it's pretty self-explanatory. I think he deserves to be the Heisman Trophy winner. He showed out every week, been a game changer, not just Saturdays. That guy puts it on the line every day in practice, every day in meetings. More dialed in, more committed and more dedicated than any guy I've ever been around. So, you know, how can you not root for a guy like that that in our opinion deserves it fully.

BLAKE CORUM: I agree. He should win the Heisman. He comes in the facility every day. He leads by example. And he just gives it everything he has every time he steps on the field. Meetings. It doesn't matter what it is, you know.

I think he's proved to the world why he should win the Heisman. You know, he's just a tremendous player. Probably going -- I think should get drafted number one. But, you know, it's great having a player like that on our team.



Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: I think just top down, coaches and players. Leadership amongst each other, knowing that we couldn't ride that high from last week and, you know, win that game but let them beat us this game. Everyone was dedicated, fully focused on Iowa.

And we had one job to do. And that was to come out here and execute and win this game. And the message last night, all the pressure -- I don't know if it was pressure. This game meant a lot, for this program, this team, this family, these fans, everyone that has had hands on this thing.

And on top of it, we wanted to play for 42, all those that tragically lost their lives in that community and everything. It's up to God, man. We scored 42 points, man. So it's just kind of -- gave me chills when I noticed that.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: You know, we came in. Coaches talked, had a great plan and, you know, just said we're going to go out there, we're going to see what they're in, we're going to adjust. That's what we did. Just stayed in our stance a little bit longer. Stay in that squat.

But, you know, everyone was dialed in. Great communication. And just went out there and knowing that was 30 minutes to accomplish our dreams, accomplish our goals. And whatever it was going to take. So made good adjustments and executed really well.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: Honestly, no one even thought it was a tough first half. He was just you're calm, cool, collected. What are we going to do to win this game. And that was the message all around.

Q. (No microphone.)

BLAKE CORUM: You know, I think everyone is just bought in from the jump. You know, it didn't matter who was coming in. You know, like everyone bought in. Everyone saw a goal. Everyone realized how many people were doubting us. Like you said, 2 percent.

But we believed in each other at the end of the day. And every coach that coach has brought in has been tremendous. We play for those coaches, they play for us. And it's been great, you know. I love all of those coaches that he's brought in. You know, Coach Hart and everyone

else, Coach McDonald, all those guys.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: Hey, however it shakes down. I'm just excited to go out and play more football.

BLAKE CORUM: That's right.

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: Do you mean like before we all came here?

Q. (No microphone.)

ANDREW VASTARDIS: I mean, shoot. I've been a Michigan fan since I was little, you know. Just always loved this team, loved this program. Always wanted to be a part of it.

And just coming in at a time where energy was high like that where we fully believed that at some point or another during our legacy something would happen, something would put Michigan back on top.

And I think just every guy that's come in after I've been here -- because I'm the old head, apparently. But every guy that's come in here after I got here has just bought into that and done everything they can to make that happen.

And, gosh darn it, I'm just so excited to have people around me that care, love each other and just put it all on the line for each other because, I mean, that's what it's all about.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: Yeah. I mean, by the end of the first half, you know, they started bringing some more pressure, you know, and a lot of those -- a lot of the drop-back game that we had going on was a lot of five-man protection. And they were bringing one more than we could handle.

They had some success with it. So, you know, we were doing some check with me stuff to make sure that we were in the right play. You know, obviously when I'm hot, that's not a good situation.

So we did the best we could. And it required the offensive line to be in their stance for a pretty long time. So I know those boys were battling, and we appreciate them. And we were just able to play Michigan football. I don't think we played our style of football in the first half. And, you know, we knew that. And, you know, we regrouped and we had a good second half.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: Schoony, yeah. Schoony had a big game. I mean, the tight ends had a phenomenal game.

That was a huge play. You know, I'm just so happy for these dudes, you know. It's just -- you know, I'm so happy to be a part of this team. And, you know, you could choose any guy who played today who contributed to this game. And the tight ends did for sure.

Q. Other guys talked about 2 percent, that was your chance to win the Big 10. We haven't really heard that during the season. Was that simmering below (no microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: Well, we didn't find out the exact statistic until this week. But, yeah, 2 percent for the last week. We thought about 2 percent the last week. And, yeah, I mean, we knew that this team -- guys on this team, this team is just -- you know, we've gone under some scrutiny. We know that. And we've battled through. We've -- you know, we're just such a great group of guys who just care about each other.

And, you know, it's -- we've really had the mentality of Michigan versus everybody. And, you know, I just don't know much to say other than I love these dudes, like, really.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: I love the identity that we've created on offense. I think, you know, whether -- you know, Coach Harbaugh said whether you travel through the air or on the ground, it doesn't matter, as long as we're scoring touchdowns. And I just love -- the physicality of this offense, you know, I think is the greatest attribute.

BLAKE CORUM: It's crazy.

CADE McNAMARA: And, you know, toughness is something that, you know, we -- that we take to heart and that we have made our identity that. And I really -- I just love the identity that we've created, no matter what the style of football is at this day and age.

Q. (No microphone.)

BLAKE CORUM: Hassan has performed all year, even before I was injured, you know, he was performing. But it just took a lot of hours in the training room with the trainers, you know, a lot of rehab. You know, I was trying to do everything to get back.

I'm still not, you know, 100 percent yet. But I'm still going to get back into the training room and rehab and rehab until it gets back to 100. But it was tough, you know, because, you know, I want to be out there with the guys. You know, I want to be running behind V and I want to fade and blocking for Cade, making sure I pick up a block.

But, you know, watching those guys like Hassan and Donovan come together and perform, it -- I loved it, you know. I always want to see other people be successful. And that's why I think the team is so special because we all want each other to be successful. We don't care who scores the touchdowns. We don't care who gets the rushing yards or the tackles, whatever it may be, you know. We just want to win. And when you want to win, you don't care.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: Yeah. I think, you know, a strength of this team is our ability to play complementary football. It just seems like when we need a stop, the defense makes a stop. When we need a touchdown, we score a touchdown.

And I think, you know, as you mentioned, just, you know, the magnitude of that drive, it set the tone for the second half. And, you know, it was just -- Michigan football playing Michigan football. And we were -- obviously, once we get back on track like that, you know, it's a good feeling. And, honestly, it's a feeling that we feel that we just can't be stopped. We just need the opportunities.

And, you know -- yeah, I'm just glad that we were able to make the adjustments. The coaches did a great job of prepping us. And it was a big drive for us for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: Yeah. I actually -- one of the first things I thought of after, you know, we won was Coach Harbaugh. And I think, you know, that happened against Ohio State. That happened, you know, here today again.

It's just, you know -- after last season, you know, it was so tough and not just for us players but for Coach Harbaugh as well. And we know that there's not one person who cares about Michigan more than Coach Harbaugh. And, you know, this team -- you know, we came together. And we want to win for Coach Harbaugh too. And, you know, we're just so happy that we were able to give him that joy because he deserves it.

Q. (No microphone.)

CADE McNAMARA: He dropped dimes. I was shocked. He hasn't thrown a ball like that in practice, let me tell you, or else I might be second string. But -- but, yeah, he's just an extremely athletic player and, you know, he contributes to the offense in his unique way. Yeah. He's a gamer, I guess, with the arm.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And he can pass.

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