

# Capital One Orange Bowl: Florida State vs Michigan

Thursday, December 29, 2016

## Jim Harbaugh

Michigan Wolverines

JIM HARBAUGH: Hello. Good morning. We're enjoying the Florida sun, and the weather has been great. The practices have been real good, as well. Looking forward to the ballgame tomorrow night. Thank you.

**Q. Talking to your guys, it sounds like they're doing a lot of eating, sleeping and playing football. They say you're approaching this as a business trip. How would you describe your mental approach to this game or to the week?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, our approach, my approach is to take advantage of the tremendous opportunity that you have during a bowl game to be with your teammates, to connect with your teammates. People talk about team bonding, they talk about team building a lot and all the different ways that you can do that. You can do that as a team, as well.

For many of our senior players that are going through their last game at Michigan, it's a last time to be with your team, to connect with your teammates. This team will never be the same team again after this ballgame. Young players and those players that are continuing at the University of Michigan, playing for the Wolverines, this is a chance to continue to be with their teammates and build the most important relationship that you have on a football team is with your teammates.

Just taking advantage of that tremendous opportunity is the way we've been approaching it.

**Q. I'm just curious, has your approach evolved over time as far as ways or tricks to keep a team kind of going? You have a month, usually a month between the regular season as a bowl game. I'm just wondering how you find ways to try to keep your team as sharp as you can in that sort of layoff.**

JIM HARBAUGH: Just enjoying it. I mean, to enjoy the opportunity of playing the game of football. I mean, you like to do it. I love to do it. Michael Jordan said, the way he liked basketball, like eating ice cream. He wanted to do it every day. That resonates with me. That having an opportunity to play and coach the game you love, it's as good as it gets.

**Q. Jimbo mentioned if a quarterback is not tough, a team is not tough. What have you seen out of**



**Wilton this year as far as his resiliency, able to bounce back from the injury and just kind of the way that he's commanded the team and led the team?**

JIM HARBAUGH: It's really important to Wilton to be good. He practices hard every day. He's displayed mental toughness, physical toughness, and it's been a joy to watch him progress this season.

**Q. What has the veteran status of your team allowed you to do as a coach and as a leader of men? How has that facilitated how you've been able to interact and work with your guys?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, it's a great question. You know, been positives in so many areas with the group of juniors and seniors that we have on the team. They set a very high standard of work ethic and how they compete and how they -- their gung ho approach to preparation and practices, games. That's been a real, real plus. I mean, you have examples, real live examples of so many that are doing it the right way. And then also examples of players that have gotten better daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.

Younger players want somebody to look up to. They want -- if they're smart, they do that. They pick somebody out and they watch how they approach it, and they emulate them. From all those -- from those standpoints of work ethic and enthusiasm, our juniors, our seniors do a great job of leading by what they do, by example.

**Q. But has it given you more freedom to allow you to open things up a little bit more with what you want to do?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I'm trying to -- as a coach, as a teacher, you try to teach those things most importantly. Try hard, give it your very best, and you will see results. I have living examples of guys that are doing that, so that makes my job more effective.

**Q. Obviously during the regular season you're playing for a Conference Championship. I'm just wondering, during the bowl season, do you play for conference pride to show fans or recruits that the Big Ten is the best conference, or does that play into your inspiration at all?**

JIM HARBAUGH: You know, winning the Orange Bowl championship is our goal now. That's a lot, in our

minds. We want to win the most awards. We want to get the best grades. We want to excel at sports, and we have that opportunity to win a trophy.

**Q. We talked to some of the guys the other day about how some of these seniors are not going to be here on Saturday, they're going to be gone. For you, guys like Jourdan and Wormley, they were kind of core guys for you right when you got here. Have you stopped to think about what they've meant to you or how much you'll miss them when Saturday comes and they're off doing NFL stuff?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, get very sentimental. I understand that the team won't be the same. When this game is over, it'll exist, it'll exist in the record books, it'll exist in our memories, but the ball team as we know it won't be the same after this game. So I get very nostalgic about that.

I want them to leave with dignity and pride, knowing that they went out and played the very best they could and gave it their all. That's all you can ask, and we'll strive for that to be a win.

**Q. You touched on this a little bit saying that the Orange Bowl, winning the Orange Bowl is your goal, but there's a perception kind of going around the country that bowl games have devalued, become meaningless. What makes these bowl games continue to be important despite the playoffs emerging?**

JIM HARBAUGH: To win a championship, to win a trophy, what I just explained, to want to go out and give it your very best. You want to give it your all. You want to have dignity and pride, and you'll have that in doing your very best. But you also want to win. That's a lot, isn't it? Don't you think? I think it is.

**Q. Just your initial take on what you saw from Deondre Francois and as a former quarterback how he's looked his freshman year and taking the hits he has?**

JIM HARBAUGH: He looks good, looks real good. Looks like a good quarterback should. Very good throwing from the pocket. It just all looks right. Everything is coordinated. Everything is synced up, the footwork, the throwing mechanics, his vision. He's been very impressive, and so early in his career is even more impressive.

**Q. Did you find your all-business approach to the bowl game, do you find your players embrace it even more because of the success in last year's bowl game and they saw the benefit of that when you beat Florida?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, I mean, you say all business approach. That doesn't resonate with me. As I said

earlier, I mean, this connecting with our team, being with our team, doing what we love to do, that's -- we're doing it for the last time for some guys. For some guys. Others it's maybe the second time or the first time. But to have the opportunity to be around your teammates, and when you're on a team, those relationships that you have with your teammates, those are the tightest ones, those are the closest ones. That's the way I feel about it and approach it.

**Q. Don Brown hasn't really taken a traditional coaching path. How does that influence how he interacts with players and his kind of innovative nature as a coordinator?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, I mean, there are a lot of paths to take in the coaching profession. I don't know exactly what you mean by that. What's the question?

**Q. He worked with smaller schools most of his career, and it had a different impact on the way he innovates or his career path --**

JIM HARBAUGH: Don is a tremendous coach and teacher, first and foremost, one of the very best. I haven't been around better, in all phases, in terms of relationships with the staff, with the players, with his football acumen at the very highest level. He's a good person. So all things and all ways, somebody that you really like being around. Don Brown is somebody that you respect and you want to emulate, you want to be like. So I just can't say enough good things about him as a person and a football coach.

**Q. We're putting a little piece together on Kori Reblin, your cord guy that stands behind you. Can you just describe his role exactly and why it's so important?**

JIM HARBAUGH: He's just a good dude. I've had some issues with the cordless headphones --

**Q. I can relate to that.**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, sometimes they go out, sometimes you get interference from traffic and fire trucks and things. So yeah, just -- I've liked to go with the ones that have the cords.

**Q. What makes him good at that?**

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't ever really notice him, so I guess that's what makes him good. He's just -- he does it in a very seamless way. There's never -- can't think of too many issues that we've had, and I know there would be a lot of issues if he wasn't there.

That's not all he does, too. Kori is an equipment manager and has a lot of responsibilities. That's not his only responsibility. He does a lot of things well.

**Q. But he likes doing that, just so you know.**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah. I like having him do it.

**Q. What does it mean to the team and to you when players like Mo Hurst and Mason Cole follow what Jake and Jourdan and Chris did last year, the will to come back, the fact that guys want to come back, and what kind of impetus does that give the team, and what does it mean to you that guys enjoy it that much?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, the thing that strikes me the most is that they're well-thought-out decisions. They've weighed options and thought they've about it and done research and are doing what they think is in their best interest. If somebody is doing that, it's always been my opinion that if somebody is putting their family first and even puts themselves first in a way that both of those things will be good for the team. If they're really doing -- if they're really putting their family first, and they're really putting themselves, what's good for them next, it'll be good for the team. I'm impressed that they're researching it and they're thinking about it and they're making a decision that's best for them. That's what we encourage. That's what I think about that.

**Q. Did that big bowl win over Florida last year have any carryover effect going into this season, and also, how does this Florida State team compare to that Florida team?**

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't think it does. And I really don't like the practice of comparing two teams. Whenever you compare somebody, it always gets diminished.

**Q. What about the carryover effect? Did it have any carryover?**

JIM HARBAUGH: No, I didn't think it did much.

**Q. What is your evaluation on DeMarcus Walker?**

JIM HARBAUGH: I think he's their best player, one of the best players we've seen. He's a real outstanding player. I think he's their most outstanding player on the best unit we've seen all season.

**Q. Quite a lot of emotion this season. Can you kind of just describe and explain -- I know you just said you don't like to compare and contrast, but as far as your coaching career is concerned, is this one of the more emotional seasons that your team has gone through?**

JIM HARBAUGH: It's an emotional game, played and coached by emotional people. Most seasons are -- most games, they're all emotional.

**Q. At some point this week, Jourdan Lewis said, it's not about me, and he was excited about the fearlessness of the younger players on this team and the future of the program. Thoughts about that**

**kind of attitude out of one of your veterans?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Jourdan Lewis is -- he's a great guy, great teammate, great player. Been a joy to be around for the last two years. No drama whatsoever. He just always goes out and gives it his best and does it with a bounce in his step, zest, pizzazz. There's a happiness about him that's infectious, and that's what we were talking about earlier, a great example of somebody to emulate. But yeah, he's a winner and a champion all the way in my book.

**Q. How important is South Florida and the state of Florida in your recruiting efforts in your first two years at Michigan, and also being able to play Florida and Florida State now in Miami, how is that going to help you put more foothold down here as far as recruiting goes?**

JIM HARBAUGH: You know, I've always had great respect for the state of Florida in terms of how the youngsters play football. They come up early. There's stories of five and six year olds playing football. You know, I just love it. Frank Gore has told me all the stories of growing up in Florida and started playing football when he was five and played his college ball here. There's a real pride when you talk to anybody that's played football growing up in the state of Florida, pride about the type of football that's played in Florida, and there's a respect nationally. Everybody that I know that knows football has a great respect for Florida football.

**Q. As you said, with so many seniors on this team, it'll be a completely different team next year. In these bowl practices, have you been able to take a longer look at some of the younger guys, and has anything jumped out at you that excites you more?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, that's been a -- it is a part of a bowl game and bowl preparation is practice time with younger players. There's been some real encouraging things, and also there's obvious improvements that need to be made. That's a process, and it gives you a better idea for -- when spring practice starts, here's the areas that we need to address with some of the younger players. But that's always a heck of a good time to start. You feel like you've got to jump on it, and I feel like you've cheated the system, that the young players are getting the opportunity to have spring practice before spring practice even starts. That process has begun.

**Q. Just to follow up to that, any names that jumped out, in players in particular that you wanted to name that jumped out at you?**

JIM HARBAUGH: No, didn't want to name any names in particular.

**Q. With so many seniors, do you think there's an**

**increased urgency with this being their last game in terms of motivation to go out in a certain way? Sometimes the small senior classes have in effect done the whole thing. Do you notice that with these practices and this game?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I think I have. You're never in anybody else's skin but your own, but I've looked back, and I remember sitting in locker rooms and pee-wee hockey and little league football and baseball and knowing that that was going to be my last hockey game or my last high school football game or last high school basketball game, last college game, you know, different times throughout my own life. I bet everybody here can resonate with that feeling, that at some point they've been in that situation in athletics. You know, that's -- pretty sure that those emotions are -- and it's understood by our players that that's the situation, they're playing their last college game.

**Q. With Florida State leading the league, leading the nation in sacks, has there been an emphasize on offensive line practice and meetings, film study and stuff like that?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yes, yes, absolutely, very aware of that attribute that the Seminoles have. It's been an emphasis, and we do our best to protect.

**Q. Both programs have big, looming coaching figures, curious how you take the foundations they laid and help keep things current? How do you take the lessons, the foundation that Bo laid and make sure it's updated and current for the modern-day way you coach your team?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, I mean, being a good learner, I learned a lot of things from some very good coaches, including Bo Schembechler, my dad, Mike Ditka, Lindy Infante, Ted Marchibroda, so personally, the things you learn, I mean, you take and try to do the best job you can coaching that you can do. That's the approach I've taken.

**Q. I was wondering if you could elaborate on the statement last week about Grant Perry. What did you learn last week that you didn't know that led to the second suspension?**

JIM HARBAUGH: I would just refer you back to the statement that the University made.

**Q. I know this is not your first time at the Orange Bowl. I wanted to get your overall thoughts on oranges, if you could eat oranges in a five-minute span, how many could you eat, do you like the taste of orange juice after you brush your teeth, and do you like mandarin oranges in your salad?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I mean, who doesn't? I can't find anybody that doesn't like mandarin oranges. I find oranges to be very refreshing, and same with orange

juice. Great thirst quencher, and last time I ate an orange was yesterday. I had one the day before that. I have not tried to see how many oranges I could eat in -- what did you say, five minutes?

**Q. How about oranges after you brush your teeth?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, if that's all you've got there, why not? It's not the go-to post tooth-brushing rinse, but...

**Q. Last year you played Florida and its backyard basically in another citrus-themed game. It was a road game for you basically, even though bowl games are, quote-unquote, neutral. Do you almost take a road game approach here?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yes, in terms of crowd noise, et cetera, we have to prepare for that and anticipate that that could be the case. And we have.

**Q. You came to the Orange Bowl with your dad as a boy, and if I'm not mistaken, Jack is here with you, and I'm not sure how many of your children are, but what does it mean to you to be able to continue that tradition and spend time with your children here as you prepare for this game?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, five of my six children are here, and it's been amazing. My daughter couldn't come, she had water polo games yesterday and then a tournament starting today. It's been great watching them run around the hotel. My son Jack coming out to practice yesterday, and having a ball. We talked last night, asked him what the best part of his day was, and he said it was coming to practice. So that was -- yeah, it warmed my heart. You know, just watching our families, not just mine but other coaches' sons, daughters that have come to practice or been around the team meals interacting with the team, watching our players interact with my kids is great. They've been awesome.

I remember that feeling as a kid when a Michigan football player would notice me as a nine or ten-year old and pat you on the back or toss you a ball, and to see Jake or John O'Korn tossing the ball with my kids, it's like, you fight back the tears. You get very sentimental. I do. It's as good as it gets.

**Q. Last year at this time, around this week in Orlando, you said that that first year you were here was your favorite year in football, after you won the Citrus Bowl. I'm interested, what has this year meant to you? I'm not telling you to compare them, I'm just saying what has this year meant to you?**

JIM HARBAUGH: As it continues, it's been a great year. I'm blessed to be able to do what we do, and tremendously fortunate to have this opportunity to be out there on the field and see the practices come

together over the last weeks and get ready to play for this -- get ready to emotionally, physically watch the team to prepare to play their game. You're consumed mainly by your preparations, by doing your duties, coaching the team and putting them in the best possible position that you can as a coach, but definitely as we described in detail here, there's sentimental emotions that have been with us and will be with us. It's been good, real good.

**Q. I want to get your thoughts on this because you have mentioned that the fun is in the football work and the team unity with the guys being down here with the practicing and everything, but your players are a little disappointed they haven't seen any bikinis. I'd like to get your thoughts on that.**

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't have any thoughts on that.

**Q. They would like to see some bikinis before they leave.**

JIM HARBAUGH: I don't know about that. I don't know anything about that. I don't know what you're talking about.

**Q. See the beach.**

JIM HARBAUGH: I do not know what you're talking about.

**Q. The beach, the bikinis.**

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah. I don't know anything about that.

**Q. Not on the itinerary?**

JIM HARBAUGH: Don't know what you're talking about.