

September 25, 2010



Stanford - 37
Notre Dame - 14

An interview with:

COACH JIM HARBAUGH

COACH HARBAUGH: Might be the biggest press conference I've ever been to right here.

We're happy for the win. We'll move forward with humble hearts. Really proud of our team, really proud of our coaches. Thought they did a great job putting together a game plan for this week and our players going out and executing it. I'm as fired up as anything about the kickoff coverage. That was really impressive by our guys.

I thought Brian Polian did a tremendous job. With the exception of the fumbled punt, kickoff coverage was good. Nate Whitaker tying a Stanford school record was huge. I was pleased with the play of our special teams and the way our defense played. Thought that was an outstanding performance by our defense.

Tough to get pressure on this quarterback. He gets the ball out great and quick. I thought we were able to do that. Made some big plays in the back end. Delano Howell did a great job coming up, changing momentum with some of those hits. Chase Thomas.

Gave a game ball to Owen Marecic. Tremendous job by him. Scored a touchdown. Offensively got one on the interception. Then all the plays you don't see, all the tackles inside, linebacker, the way he blocked I thought was just a great, great game by him.

Gave away some other game balls, too. Gave away a lot of game balls, probably about five this game. Told the team if I was at USD, I gave away that many game balls, we wouldn't be able to play the next week.

We're really happy about the win and we'll move forward and get ready for Oregon.

Q. Jim, the defensive game plan was pretty effective.

COACH HARBAUGH: We really wanted to get penetration, do a good job up front knocking 'em back, chipping the tight end, Rudolph, trying to keep him without the ability to get free access into our defense and our secondary. Thought we did a good job containing him. He's a heck of a player.

Try to get pressure, which is really hard. Dayne Crist gets the ball out so quick. Got good weapons to go to. We just made some plays in the back end in the secondary and up front. At the linebacker level, Shayne Skov had a heck of a ballgame, so did Owen Marecic. The two outside linebackers played as well as I thought they had, Thomas and Keiser. Good job by Vic Fangio, our defensive coordinator, defensive staff, players executing. Good day for us defensively.

Talk about trying to go on the road, win in a really tough place to win a game. Talk about hostile environment. Classy environment, but hostile for a visiting team. In order to win in that situation, you really got to be able to bring your defense and have your defense play well. We talk about packing the defense for the road games. Thought we did that today.

Q. How would you assess Andrew's day?

COACH HARBAUGH: He made some terrific throws all game long, including the first one, the touchdown. They brought everybody, except for four. Zero blitz, played zero coverage. He bought some time and threw a heck of a ball to Fleener. Fleener looked to me like he had about a second and a half of hang time up in the air and was able to make a heck of a catch.

But got the ball down field, made some big throws to Konrad Reuland, Griff Whalen. The big one to Stepfan Taylor. Got free out of the

backfield, half back post. He had a very good day, managed the game extremely well.

You may talk about the two interceptions, those were really good plays by Notre Dame, both tips. Happened to be a guy there to pick off the tip. But thought he played very well.

Q. Big picture. When you were in your first couple years, could see a start of a season like this coming the first couple years?

COACH HARBAUGH: A lot of hard work by our players. They play to win and play for each other. That's the kind of attitude you want out of your ballgame.

Q. You kidded this is the biggest press conference you've been in. In terms of victories, how big is it, given the stage?

COACH HARBAUGH: You know, it's big. It's a big win for us. We just look at every game like it's a championship game. In order to win the championship, you got to win your next ballgame.

This was the next game, coming here, executing well. Winning on the road is extremely important if you're going to be a champion. Now next week is the big game.

We'll be excited for Monday's practice, to be honest with you, meetings, getting ready for the next one. But this team will move forward with humble hearts. Got to have a great week of preparation to get ready next week for Oregon.

Q. There was an offensive drive for you in the middle of the third quarter where you ran almost every play. Can you talk about what you saw and what you feel you see in your offensive line.

COACH HARBAUGH: Well, I mean, we really needed to grind some meat. I thought they did a heck of a job. Stepfan Taylor, in particular. The runningback seemed to get stronger as he went along. None of our backs had that many carries. I think he had almost 30 or maybe right there at 30 carries. That was kind of uncharted waters for our young backs.

Experienced offensive line was doing a good job. I don't know who won the battle up front, to be honest with you. I thought it was a really fight on both sides of the ball up front. We'd get knocked back, we would knock them back, they would knock us back, and so on. It was tough up front.

When we needed to grind some meat, our guys hunkered down, treated every play like it was important, and we were able to put together some good drives that ended in some field goals. But those were important points.

Q. Coming into this game, would you have considered it a crazy notion that your field goal kicker would outscore the offense you were playing against?

COACH HARBAUGH: No. I mean, of course not. But it was a great day by Nate. He had a really good week of preparation. I know this game meant a lot to him and his family. To come out and play well, really the way he kicked off was equally as important in the ballgame. Deep kickoffs every single one, he hit it true, allowed us to get down there and play good kickoff coverage.

Really fired up about our kickoff coverage. Guys were running and hitting and playing. That was really important in the field position game today.

Q. So few players that play both ways. How impressive was what Owen did, especially that late in the game?

COACH HARBAUGH: I've called him a lot of things. He's a perfect football player. Just never been around a guy like this in 30 some years of playing college, pro football and in coaching. He does everything right. He's conditioned himself to play that kind of football game. He's worked extremely hard.

Then to really consider just mentally what that takes to learn both systems, offensively and defensively, to be able to go out there and execute and make plays. You know, he's the perfect football player.

You know, a couple of the other things about Owen, he's a very humble guy, very quiet guy, but takes a lot of pride in what he's doing. Just treats every game like no matter what he's proved in the past, now he's proven it again.

It's uncharted waters. Nobody's doing it except for him. I think the biggest thing is that he's playing the two most physical positions in the game of football: fullback and middle linebacker. Just got to take your hat off to him and enjoy watching it, 'cause I sure do.

Q. You mentioned a few minutes ago how good it felt to come into a hostile

environment and play well. Is there a carryover? How valuable can this experience be for next Saturday?

COACH HARBAUGH: Well, I mean, it's big. Football, it's the best sport out there. It's a tremendous game, first of all. It's a game that really tests a man's courage. To win a ballgame, I mean, that is a great thing. Then to be able to go into another stadium, into a hostile environment, I mean, nothing makes you feel quite like a man like that does, you know.

So I think it will be good for our football team. But, you know, every week in college football is a new week and your season can turn on one week. Just important for us to move forward, get ready for Oregon, keep going with humble hearts, keep working.

Q. Jim, has Stepfan Taylor solidified the number one tailback role or was that part of that a function of the fact that Gaffney got hurt early?

COACH HARBAUGH: Yeah, I mean, Gaffney did. He came out of the ballgame. We would have liked to have gone to Gaffney on some of those downs. But Stepfan really stepped up, played a heck of a game. I think he went over a hundred yards. I don't know for sure about that. But seemed that way. Caught the ball out of the backfield. Did a real nice job in protection. He's a young back. He's only in his second year.

But, you know, it's one of those games that really will be great for his confidence, you know, and for our ballclub's confidence in him. Right now I'd say yes.

Q. Coach, I'd like to ask you about, you mentioned kickoff coverage. What other things went well? What other things do you think your team did really well as positives?

COACH HARBAUGH: Well, I thought the biggest positives were the way we played on special teams, the way we played defensively. The physical nature of the ballgame by our defense with Chase Thomas, with Keiser, with Fua, Masifilo. Secondary Delano Howell came up with some big hits, was triggering, coming up fast. When he got there, there were big hits. Those are big momentum changers in a ballgame.

Coverage was outstanding against a very quality quarterback and quality receivers, a system that is extremely tough to defend, especially on one week's practice notice.

So then the linebackers. I thought Shayne Skov was outstanding, along with Maurice. So many positives there defensively, special teams-wise. We talked a little bit about the offense. But, you know, to be honest with you, we're kind of moving on right now. Thought the players executed well. That's the biggest positive.

I thought they really took the approach of every play is important and played the ballgame that way from start to finish. Maybe that's the biggest positive of all.

Q. You talked about Crist being a quality quarterback. What do you like about him?

COACH HARBAUGH: He plays with a lot of poise, really good stature in the pocket, sees the field extremely well, gets the ball out very quickly. He's an accurate, decisive quarterback. He's a heck of a competitor, too. You saw that today. He took some shots. Never lingered on the ground, adjusted any pads or anything. He popped right back up and kept firing it.

He's outstanding. Good football team we played today.

Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

ASAP sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

Coach Harbaugh - 09.25.10.doc