

**January 12, 2015**



**NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIP**  
NORTH TEXAS 2015

Ohio State - 42  
Oregon - 20

An Interview With:

**URBAN MEYER  
CARDALE JONES  
EZEKIEL ELLIOTT**

URBAN MEYER: I just want to on behalf of the Ohio State University and the great state of Ohio and my players and coaching staff, I want to tell the College Football Playoff committee and everyone associated with this incredible experience that it was done first class, and I think you have two great teams out there. We have a lot of respect for Oregon and Coach [Mark] Helfrich, but I love these players. This team wasn't supposed to do this, but they fought through adversity, they got stronger and stronger and stronger, and this is a great team. We finished the year a great team. To have four turnovers and still beat a team like that 42-20, incredible experience. I don't want to get over dramatic, but it's as improved a football team, and I've watched football for a long time from Game 1 to Game 15. I've never seen anything like it.

**Q. You guys turned the ball over four times. I think you said coming into this game you couldn't do that and win this game. Is this sort of a microcosm of all the adversity you had to overcome this season to win this game?**

URBAN MEYER: It is, and it's also a testimony to the improvement our defense has made. We won that game because of course Zeke Elliott and of course our offensive line, but our defense, to hold Marcus -- I know he threw for a bunch of yards, 300-plus yards, but our defense, we tackled tonight and did a great job.

**Q. This was an extremely young team that you have. First of all, is this something that you thought would be coming perhaps another year, maybe not right now, particularly the way you started out, and secondly, could you talk about the future of the program and just how bright it is?**

URBAN MEYER: Well, I think Eli Apple, Zeke, I thought we had high expectations for Zeke because we saw what could do last year, but that group of sophomores that we have that really stepped up and played, they complemented the seniors. Whenever you have a coaching transition, there's usually a little bit of a blip or a miss in the recruiting, and if our sophomore class didn't step up, we wouldn't be where we are. I mean, it's incredible. A lot of them are redshirt freshmen, and yeah, to answer your question, I certainly did not see that happening after spring practice and early in the season. But I undervalued -- I didn't quite understand the improvement that these guys could make.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, you've been through this before. You've won the National Championship before. At the same time, Ohio State means so much to you. What does it mean for you to bring Ohio State back to the pinnacle?**

URBAN MEYER: I'm not shy about the love I have for this great state. Ashtabula, Ohio, is my hometown. I've got to travel all around the country and I realized how fortunate I am to grow up in a great town like that in a great state. I played college football here, and to bring now a national title to the great state of Ohio, it's almost surreal.

**Q. I know you probably prefer not to talk about yourself but maybe you can in this one case. You do join one other person who's been able to bring two schools to a National Championship. It does say a lot about what Nick Saban has done, what you have done.**

**Can you talk about what it means to do something that has so rarely been done?**

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, very humbled. I've got my third-string quarterback sitting here to my left. I've never met a third-string quarterback before, and he's 3-0. I'm very humbled that you brought that up, but I'm also the first one to appreciate the people who did it, and that's our players. I love these guys, and I made a comment out there that Bill Parcells, and I'll never forget when he said that in the video that we made, it's like a blood transfer. We're officially brothers for the rest of our lives because we're champions.

**Q. Zeke obviously the MVP of the game, rushes for a new record --**

URBAN MEYER: A monster.

**Q. What have you seen from him all season as improvement, and then the last three games where he obviously just blew up?**

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, he'll be the first one, and I love Zeke because he's very humble, comes from a great family and deserves the credit. However, he's the most underrated back in America. He's one of the best post-contact yard guys I've ever been around, and on top of that he's a great human being, so I can't wait to -- we get him at least for one more year, so I can't wait to -- we start back to work on -- I'll give you a couple days off, Zeke, and we're back at it, you and Cardale.

CARDALE JONES: The chase is on.

**Q. Urban, could you in a nutshell talk about how you challenged your defense tonight to face that so-called up-tempo challenge?**

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, we challenged them and we had 16 signs everywhere. Every time our players went to get something to eat we had one of those big signs that lights up, and we thought if we could eliminate the fatigue factor and make them block us and make them play football that we'd be in pretty good shape, and that's what we did, even after all those turnovers. It's phenomenal that we held them to a field goal when Cardale dropped it going way deep into our own territory. That to me was a changing point of the game. It made it 21-20 if I'm correct, and I thought when that happened, I thought we had a chance to win this game.

**Q. This is the sixth time since 2012 that you've taken a team into a game as an underdog and all six times your team has won. What do you say to players in these situations that makes them play above in all of these games?**

URBAN MEYER: Oh, I think every team is different. This team is very smart. This team is -- we didn't spend a lot of time talking about the underdog role because that's if you have a team that maybe you have to make angry or maybe you have to be creative in motivation. This was all about eliminating the demon, what we call the demon was the 16, and you eliminate that demon, I think we could win this game. That was the whole challenge since when we found out after the Alabama game we were playing Oregon is if we can somehow eliminate that fatigue factor and turn it into inside drill and turn it into a game that's a block-and-tackle game that we could win this game, and obviously they did it.

**Q. Two years ago you were doing postgame coverage for ESPN after Alabama beat Notre Dame, and you said something to the effect that everybody had to raise to their level. What impact, if any, did that have on you, and do you feel like your program is in that position now?**

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, I think I sat and watched it, and every one of these players and every support staff, everybody on the coaching staff, everybody associated with our program, I called our strength coach, I said I'm going to send you a text right now and I want everybody in their hands immediately, and that was The Chase, and that's when that big sign went up in the facility, that's when we created an area for our players to go get extra work, and that was one of those wow moments when I saw a team that I thought -- obviously it was just dominated in the National Championship game, and they looked better than we did, so somehow we had to get to that level, and that was The Chase.

**Q. Chase is complete. Did you think you could complete it this quickly?**

URBAN MEYER: No, I made the comment -- I did as this team started getting better and better, and by the end of the year we were playing very good football, and then the Big Ten Championship game, Alabama game, and then

this one. But to say we had this vision back in September or even August, no, not a chance. I thought this was a team that we could battle and battle and find a way to win a bunch of games and then a year later go make a run at it.

**Q. On Saturday at media day I asked you about the Alabama game and overcoming two turnovers, and you said that was a good thing. You faced adversity and your team overcame it. Four tonight. Can you talk about how this team has overcome adversity all season long and especially tonight?**

URBAN MEYER: Well, I think the guys sitting next to me, I made a comment, Cardale is a case study for overcoming adversity and how if alignment is -- his personal alignment with his mentor, his high school coach, and his coaching staff, if that didn't happen, he wouldn't be sitting here. Same thing with our team. If we didn't have alignment, not one time have I ever heard an offensive player criticize a defensive player or a special teams player, and the same with the coaching staff. Adversity, it's how you respond to adversity, that's in your life, and our guys have been trained how to do it, but it's not that easy. You can train however you want. These guys have great heart for each other. A lot of people say that. Very few back it up. These guys backed it up.

**Q. You talked the other day about how Oregon's defense and special teams really stood out to you in preparation. I was just wondering if there was anything that surprised you about Oregon tonight?**

URBAN MEYER: No, I thought they were a great team. I think we tackled well, and we played -- other than turnovers, that's as well as we played. We blocked them and we ran the ball against those two giant defensive ends. I've got a lot of respect for them. Marcus, I wish I had a chance to see him. I'll see him again some day. But I've just got a lot of respect for the Oregon program and that whole outfit.

**Q. Your defense was able to hold the Ducks to over five on third downs to start the game. They finished 2 of 12 on third down conversions and you held them to 132 yards. Can you speak about the defense's performance?**

URBAN MEYER: Yeah, defense won the game. I don't want to take away from these two

guys to my left and the offensive line, but we lose that game if we don't stop them on turnovers. We consider that a stop when you hold them to a field goal. Championships are won with defense, and our defense has been on a difficult journey the last couple years, but I'm very -- the future of our defense is even better because there are a lot of young guys playing.

**Q. Can I ask each of you to take a step back, first Cardale, then Ezekiel, what does it mean to have done this, to overcome the odds, and to be on the top of the college football world?**

CARDALE JONES: It means a lot because going back to early August, late August, around camp, everybody counted us out when our Heisman Trophy quarterback went down, and then when the first college football ranking playoffs came out we was like No. 16 or 17. Long story short, we weren't supposed to be here. We had every -- all the odds were stacked against us through the whole season, and for us to be sitting right here as national champs, it only means a lot to me but our community, Buckeye Nation, and our hometowns.

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: It means everything to us, just being able to accomplish this great accomplishment, winning the National Championship after everything we went through this season, losing Braxton, then losing to Virginia Tech and how we rebounded against that, and the tough game at Penn State that went to double overtime, then traveling to Michigan State in that hostile environment, then losing J. T. [Barrett] and having this clown step in. It seems like we've been through everything, and it made us who we were.

**Q. Zeke, this was the most carries you had in a game this season. How did it feel? Did you know it was going to be like that going in? And how does it feel now?**

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: Oh, I definitely feel it now, but I knew going into the game that we wanted to run the ball. We knew that our O-line was bigger and more physical than their D-line, and we just had to punch them in the mouth, and the O-line, they came out, they played their butts off and they paved the way for me. He was hitting, and he just kept feeding me the ball.

**Q. Zeke, can you tell me what it's going to take to repeat next year? This is kind of a one-year plan ahead of time. What it will take to repeat again next year, and can you do it again?**

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: We've just got to stay a hungry team. We're losing some great seniors, but we have a lot of great young players that will step up, and this year was just a great year to learn a lot of things, and I think we'll be the same team next year, as long as we stay humble, we grind hard in the offseason, don't let our heads get too big, I think we'll be here next year.

**Q. Zeke, obviously you guys look like you're having fun up there right now, but you said after the game it just doesn't feel real. Has it set in right now, and what's it mean to you to obviously get the MVP and set a record in this game?**

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: It's starting to sink in. Just getting the MVP, I credit that to my big boys up front, actually everybody on the offense. Everybody does their job, and nothing would be possible without that team effort. But just setting that record, I feel blessed. All the great running backs that have come through Ohio State, Archie Griffin, Eddie George, Beanie Wells, just being able to accomplish something that all of them weren't able to accomplish, it means the world to me, and I'm happy that I was able to carry on that lineage this season.

**Q. Cardale, what has Coach Meyer meant to building this program? Obviously when he came in, it was a down time and a lot of turmoil in the program, and I don't know that anybody saw winning a title this quickly and having the success that y'all have had so quickly. What has he meant to the program and getting it to where it is today?**

CARDALE JONES: I mean, he means a lot to us as players but to this program and the university as a whole because when he first got in, as far as the head coaching job, his first team meeting was actually my first day on campus, as well, and the way he attacked the team and let us know it was time for a change and it started at the top with the culture, without that, the defining moment in our program and then something magical, like he always says, happened, when we played Michigan State my first year here, so two years ago, the way that them seniors bought in and they knew they couldn't -- we weren't able to

play for a bowl game at the end of the season, which was unbelievable. Them two things were definitely a turning point for our program, and it was just definitely a point that everybody realized what we can accomplish.

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: I think the biggest thing with Coach Meyer, he just demands excellence out of everybody, every aspect of your life. When he demands that every day from you, you don't have a choice but to change. You see he had to change this clown, this goofball.

**Q. For both of you, going into the playoffs, there was a lot of debate whether or not you even deserved that fourth spot, and a lot of debate about the quality of play in the Big Ten. Did you feel like you were maybe carrying the banner for the Big Ten and that now you've sent a message about the caliber of play in your conference?**

CARDALE JONES: I mean, not really. It depends how people want to look at it. When we got into the playoffs, we didn't say, let's do it for the Big Ten. All due respect to our conference, to me it's one of the toughest conferences in the country, but we didn't strap up and say, let's go play for Wisconsin, let's go play for The Team Up North. We wanted to play for each other. We wanted to prove something to not the country about the Big Ten but prove something to the country about The Ohio State University.

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: Going to the playoffs we knew that we were representing the Big Ten, but like he said, we go out there and play for each other, we play for our brothers and we play for our university, and that's all we play for. But I think the Big Ten definitely had a great bowl season. They definitely showed what we can bring to the table, and they definitely showed that we're one of the stronger conferences in the nation.

**Q. Cardale, when you had the two mistakes that led to 10 points and they pulled within 21-20, were you flustered at all, or when the defense held Oregon to the field goal, did you kind of think, all right, this is our turn, we're going to take it back here?**

CARDALE JONES: I mean, I wasn't flustered because there was mistakes that could have been avoided. Definitely the fumble that I tried to throw out of bounds, and I think the interception, I think it bounced off Jalin's [Marshall]

pads or something like that. Just things like that, they didn't force us to commit those mistakes. It was hard to be flustered or nervous or down when you have the other guys on defense playing the way they're playing, and then definitely when you've got the guys up front blocking the way they were blocking, we really felt like we could score any time we want. That's no disrespect to the Oregon defense, that's just the time and dedication we put in on offense, starting up front.

**Q. Zeke, with these last three performances on the national stage, you're probably going to come into 2015 a frontrunner for the Heisman Trophy. Just wondering what your thoughts would be on a potential Heisman campaign.**

EZEKIEL ELLIOTT: It means everything. It's something you dream about as a kid when you're playing NCAA football and you create your little player, and he wins the Heisman. Just thinking that I'm going to have the opportunity next year to compete for the Heisman, just it means everything. I'm not going to change, I'm going to keep grinding. I'm going to do all I can to win it.

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