

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 8 2019

Tad Boyle Colorado Buffaloes



TAD BOYLE: Yeah, first of all, thanks for all being here today. It's obviously an exciting time of year to be a college basketball player or coach. It's going to be a fantastic season, I think, for the Pac-12 and I certainly hope for the Colorado Buffaloes.

Q. We know a lot of talk is on your returning players with good reason. They're studs. I'd like to know maybe a couple of different guys you need to step up for you -- who's a key besides those two in the back? Who needs to have a breakout here?

TAD BOYLE: I think in terms of breakout years, I look at a guy like D'Shawn Schwartz. He had a great off-season. He's a guy that's capable I think he showed as a freshman how capable of a shooter he is. He didn't shoot the ball as well as he could have last year. But he had a great off-season. He's really worked hard on his game, and his body looks good, he's shooting the ball well, and I think he can have a breakout year.

And I would say Daylen Kountz. They're both left-handed guys. D'Shawn is a little bit bigger, a little bit longer, but Daylen is a great slasher, can really score the ball a lot of different ways, he's getting better defensively. But I would say those two guys. We saw what Evan Battey did. He's going to be key to our team, as well. We've got a lot of keys. You go down the lineup and as you coach you feel like everybody is a key, but if you asked me for two or three guys I'd say D'Shawn and Daylen and Evan.

Q. Do you know why D'Shawn struggled with his shot?

TAD BOYLE: I think with shooters, okay, so you probably remember this, you were a good shooter, a lot of it's just mental, and it's like confidence and feeling it. His shot selection -- usually I look at shot selection if you're not shooting great percentages, but his shot selection was pretty good. I think it was more just a confidence thing and putting a little bit too much pressure on himself, and I think that's one of the things that our team is going to have to do a good job of this year is not play with the weight of the world on their shoulders. This is a new position that we've been in terms of being picked where we are.

I think we've just got to go out and play and play free

and play smart, take good shots, but play with a sense of freedom.

Q. It seems on paper that you guys have been building for this moment, but I'm sure it probably came together a little bit differently. How did you guys sort of get to this point?

TAD BOYLE: Well, I think it all starts with recruiting. You talk to any coach, I think that's what it is. As I look at our junior class, we've got McKinley and Tyler here. We just talked about D'Shawn Schwartz, Evan Battey is only a sophomore but only because he redshirted, but those four guys, that nucleus of players, we've kind of added to that. We've got a couple guys above that, Lucas Siewert and Shane Gatling that are seniors, but it starts with recruiting, and that class was a really, really solid class. I think -- I hope before it's all said and done it could be one of the best in Colorado history. But we'll have to see how it all plays out.

But I know this: Those four guys are great, great pieces to build around.

Q. You're not sneaking up on anybody anymore. You've got a bull's eye on your back. How do you manage expectations?

TAD BOYLE: Well, I think the way you manage expectations is you have to have a daily realization with our players that all that stuff doesn't mean anything, and they have to understand that, and they've got to believe that. They've got to go play -- you go earn respect. You don't -- you can't be given respect. And the fact that people have picked us where they've picked us maybe makes you feel good for a minute, but it's not going to win you any games. Just like when they pick you 11th, it's not going to lose you any games. You've just got to go out and play and you've got to come to the gym every day with the attitude we're going to get better, and we've got to prove ourselves every single night we step on the floor. You're right, we're not going to sneak up on anybody, and I wouldn't expect to.

Q. Moving the line back, does that change your philosophy a little bit, your thinking of going inside out --

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, we always want to play inside out. We always want to play through our post guys. We want to get paint touches before we shoot threes, and I

think if you've got good shooters or who other coaches think are good shooters, it's going to open the floor up for more driving opportunities for guys like McKinley and Daylen and some of our guards.

But it's also going to open it up for your big guys. Now, if you've got guys that can't shoot or other coaches don't think can shoot, and look, the Pac-12, there's a lot of teams that play zone in our league now, and so with that line going back, I don't see that changing.

Q. You're going to see a little bit more zone?

TAD BOYLE: You're going to see a little bit more zone, exactly. So that's why a lot of our practice time, certainly before practice and after practice on their own, our players got to be knocking down that shot when they're open.

Q. Just in this day and age of the one-and-done players, to have a veteran team sort of says what? I mean, is it two contrasting styles or can you win with youth? Can you win with veterans?

TAD BOYLE: I think you win with good players and you win with discipline, you win with toughness, you win with shot selection, you win with rebounding. The way you win basketball games is no different today than it was maybe 20 years ago, except for maybe the three-point line is a little bit bigger part of it.

But in terms of the one-and-done and -- I do think you'd rather have experience than youth. There's no doubt about that. I think if you look at the NCAA Tournament and the teams that have advanced, by and large that would make an argument for that case. But look, we've never had a one-and-done at Colorado. We've never had a McDonald's All-American, but we've got good players. And the players -- I think the key for coaching, especially at a place like Colorado, is you've got to make sure that your players are getting better every single year, every season. You've got to get players that love the game. You've got to get players that will work on the game and respect the game, and they don't feel a sense of entitlement.

And I think that's the biggest thing with coaching players today is fighting those things.

Q. When you're as old as your team is now, can you get through practice quicker? Do you sort of not have to break up practice as much? Can you let them go a little bit more?

TAD BOYLE: I wouldn't say quicker. I think sometimes you can make a false assumption as a coach that because we're experienced, we know what we're supposed to do. We put in a couple new actions that we hadn't had before, and guess what our juniors and seniors were having to figure it out. Now, if it's

something you've been running for two years, yeah, maybe you don't have to spend -- but the biggest key is not knowing what your job is but executing your job, and I think that's the biggest challenge as a coach is getting your players to execute at a high level.

And maybe when they're young you just want them to figure out what they're supposed to do, and now when they're juniors or seniors, we have to execute this at a high level because that's how you're going to win games. You're not going to win games by running tricky plays, you're going to win games by executing whatever the heck it is you're running, both offensively and defensively.

Q. What was it like for you to watch McKinley go through what he went through last year?

TAD BOYLE: Well, number one, it speaks to his toughness, and I think if somebody asked me earlier to describe McKinley Wright in one word, and I said "toughness." And I think that's who he is.

You know, we knew that when we recruited him, but then to see what he did last year and how he played through that, I think it just speaks to it and lets the whole -- people that follow the Pac-12 understand what a special kid he is.

Q. What were those conversations like with him as you see him separate his shoulder --

TAD BOYLE: You know, quite frankly I didn't have any. It happened at practice after Christmas, the first practice after Christmas. We were opening up in Tucson, and he was on the trip. I didn't expect him to play that weekend, and he just said, Coach, I'm going to give it a shot. I'm ready to go. I said, I didn't know you could, but okay. He played pretty well, and then after that I just left it up to him. I mean, because as a coach you've got to be careful when you have a player that's injured. They have to be the ones that are the one -- he sat out one game. He sat out the Utah game at Utah, and we got spanked. You could tell on the bench that he wasn't going to miss any more games, and he didn't.

So he's the ultimate competitor.

Q. What do you hope to see from him this year in his development?

TAD BOYLE: Well, I want to see him stay healthy, number one, and then once he stays healthy, I think McKinley has really worked on his floaters, his mid-range game. He's really worked on his three-point shooting. Those are two things that we really challenged him with at the end of last year. He's worked on those two parts of his game. I think the problems he's had as a point guard his first two years

is maybe over-penetrating, getting too deep. He's a little guy. So shooting those floaters and mid-range jump shots and knocking down open threes. He's always going to be an attack-minded guy because that's just his nature, but better decision making in the lane and being able to finish those plays.

Q. What are your thoughts on the China game this year and playing Arizona State out there?

TAD BOYLE: Thoughts on China, I'm excited. None of our players have been to China. None of our staff have been to China. It's going to be a great opportunity to experience a different country, a different culture. We're going to play a heck of an Arizona State team. You look at Bobby's teams and what they've done in the month of November, it's pretty special, pretty remarkable. The one thing we know about Arizona is they're going to be ready to go. We've got to be ready to go ourselves. I'd rather not be playing another Pac-12 team over there, but that's the way it worked out this year, so we're going to make the most of it and have a great trip.

Q. As much as you can, do you try and change the schedule a little bit this year with a veteran team?

TAD BOYLE: We changed. We definitely ramped up. If you look at last year's non-conference schedule for us and then this year's, a distinct difference because our team is different, and we knew we were going to have guys back. We knew we were going to be a veteran team. So we really ramped it up. We're playing Dayton in Chicago, we're playing at Kansas, we're on the road at Colorado State, we've got the Arizona State game, we've got Northern Iowa coming in. We really ramped up our non-conference, the Vegas tournament.

Q. The good news about the veteran guys, they know the drills, but sometimes keeping it fresh is a little bit of a challenge?

TAD BOYLE: Keeping it fresh, absolutely. And one of the things we've tried to do is scrimmage a little bit more early just to give them that taste, because yeah, there's so many drills you can do and they've been there, done that. You lose their attention a little bit. Yep, we're putting new actions in, something maybe we haven't run or tweaking some things. Every year you do that, you go through your playbook, what did we run and not use, let's get rid of that, what did we run and worked well, let's keep that, what did we run and didn't work, let's get rid of that, what are we going to add based on your personnel. So we're in the process of doing that right now.

Q. Do you think that the NCAA might make any changes or would you like to see any in advance with California and some of the other states are talking about doing with the likeness?

TAD BOYLE: The name, image and likeness --

Q. Yeah, there's three years before it goes into effect --

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, look, I think the NCAA, they have a working group right now that has been working on this issue for quite some time. It's not just something that just came as a result of the California law. So the NCAA has been working and will continue to work on what that means and what that looks like. So I think we're going to all have to wait and see what comes of that.

We obviously live in very interesting times right now when you've got different states weighing in on how you operate your business, and I don't know anybody that has the answer or has the silver bullet or knows what's going to happen, but I think we've just got to kind of wait and see. I'm interested to see what that working group comes up with. I think we'll see some changes. I just don't think anybody knows what they're going to be right now.

Q. Just following up, can you get your head around what it might do to recruiting?

TAD BOYLE: No. I mean, I think that's the big concern with the NCAA is how will it affect recruiting and how can we legislate it and then how can we enforce it, whatever changes come. We have that right now. If we change what amateurism looks like and what can and can't be done, we have to figure out how do we legislate it and how do we endorse it. I know that's part of their challenge.