

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 26 2017

## Justin Wilcox California Golden Bears

JUSTIN WILCOX: Good morning. It's a privilege to be here representing the University of California and our football program. It's an exciting year, and everybody's champing at the bit to get back on the practice field.

I'm mostly excited for you all to meet a couple of our student-athletes -- defensive lineman James Looney and running back Tre Watson -- who are great ambassadors to our program.

With that, we'll open it up for questions.

### **Q. Your overall emotions heading into training camp?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: A lot of excitement. There is a lot of energy in our building right now. Players, coaches, everybody coming back to work. I think everybody's just eager. They know we've got a lot of work to do. They know we made a lot of strides in the off-season, spring ball, summer workouts. But we got to continue that through fall camp.

### **Q. What made Beau Baldwin's offensive attractive to you?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, Beau Baldwin. Lot of great qualities. He's done an unbelievable job, obviously, at Eastern. He's a guy that's always built the offense around the players. So you look at his history, he's been productive every year, and he's done it a number of different ways. He's got a ton of experience on that side. Just think the world of him. He's a phenomenal teacher and great human being who fits in really well with our staff and our players. We're thrilled to have him.

### **Q. Do you talk about Beau Baldwin working with Marques Tuiasosopo?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, got Beau and Marques Tuiasosopo, who a lot of you may know. He's got a history in the conference. He was obviously a great player. He's got a different set of experiences, and what he brings to the table in teaching the quarterbacks and playing that position takes -- not only physically but mentally, and he's done it at the highest level. Marques is a team guy through and through, just couldn't be more excited to have him on our staff.

### **Q. Can you tell me what it's like being back in the**



### **Bay area, your dad had some pretty solid roots there?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, it's good to be back. I didn't live there when he was playing. I wasn't born yet. Not to date him, but I just did. But I got to work there for Coach Tedford three years, and we had a great run there. Obviously familiar with Cal, and it's been very beneficial being back, just how we do things. And being the No. 1 public school in the country and in the Bay Area, there's a lot to (indiscernible).

### **Q. Do you plan on having any fall camp practices open to the public?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, we will. We'll be sending that out shortly.

### **Q. What is one of the things that you found that you really need to change up?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, so we didn't spend a lot of time on tape from a year ago. It's going to be a new system. We'll have a different style of defense. We'll be a 3-4 defense, different coverages played. We have a lot of experience coming back, especially on the front seven.

We also feel really good about guys that are going to step up and take on some bigger roles. We feel like the transition throughout spring was really good, picked up the system very fast. It's a smart bunch of guys, and they're eager to get back on the field and continue to learn.

### **Q. What do you want your Bears to be known for?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Well, I want them to be known as a smart team, a resilient and tough team, and a team that plays together. It's our job to put the systems in place, which we will do, offensively, defensively, special teams, strength and conditioning. But before, we need to be smart, resilient and do plays together, and that will give us our best chance.

### **Q. Has the financial issues effected you guys as a program at all?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: No, and I think everybody has -- there are a lot of universities with financial concern. It's not unique to Cal. We've got to be mindful of how we go about our business and what we spend. And we are. I think from our standpoint and a football standpoint, we feel fully supported by our

administration.

**Q. Is there any increased importance on you guys, turning things around pretty quickly?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I think for us, we're going to go about it just like we would any other place. Everything we do is systematic of how we're going to win games. If we do that, like I said, the energy and excitement in our building, we can build on that and focus.

**Q. Can you talk about the academic requirements and how it impacts recruiting and if they give you any flexibility?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, so it is a challenging school. It's the No. 1 public school in the country, and we look at that as an opportunity in recruiting. Not every single player out there we will recruit, because they wouldn't fit the profile of the player at Cal and what's best for our team and our program, but we feel there are a lot of guys that fit in that mold, in the Bay Area, in the West, and nationally, and guys will be eager to take advantage of that opportunity.

**Q. Do they give you any flexibility or is that etched in stone?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: I don't know what you mean.

**Q. About GPA's and stuff like that?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, it's more difficult to get into some places. That's the reality of it, and that's okay. We welcome that.

**Q. Do you guys prioritize recruiting in the Bay area at all or has your staff?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: I can't speak on their priorities. I really don't know. We're going to recruit very hard. We're going to recruit in Northern California and move out from there.

We're a primarily West Coast-recruiting team. For example, one of our most talented and invested players, Demetris Robertson, is from Georgia. He came to Cal because of the opportunity academically and what it could afford him for his future on and off the field.

We'll still go national because Cal does have a national brand. We don't want to miss out on those opportunities, but we would start right in the Bay Area.

**Q. Anyone you have leaned on for advice or what you have encountered unexpectedly?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: I think you just learn along the way. I've been very fortunate to have been around a lot of different types of people and programs and learned a lot along the way. Not only with coaches, but the

assistants, the players, the programs. I think you take all of that. And for me, coming to Cal, it was a great fit for a lot of reasons. And I don't know if there was one person -- I was extremely fortunate last year to work with Paul Chryst, and for me personally, that was an invaluable experience because just really (indiscernible) with him and how he did things and the core values of the program (indiscernible).

**Q. Is it tough becoming a first-time head coach?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Is it tough? I think our job (indiscernible) your job is tough. Everybody has tough parts about their jobs. I don't feel any different. I now have a different role, and I take those responsibilities seriously. But we were able to hire a great group of assistant coaches and support staff. We've got a great administration that supported us and got them in there. And the players on our team, their attitude and the type of people they are, I really couldn't ask for more.

**Q. You have a top local 2018 quarterback (indiscernible) have you made any specific recruiting plans for him?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: I can't really talk about that.

**Q. How do you feel about the new rule not having two-a-days anymore?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: It makes it longer. I understand what they're trying to do. I think there's probably maybe some -- anything that's in the best interest of the student-athletes we're all for. I think there's probably maybe some middle ground there of how many days you can do or how you structure the two-a-days. I think that's something we're thinking about. But we just adjusted, and we'll be fine for fall camp.

**Q. Any updates on the current quarterback situation?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, so Chase, Ross Bowers came out of spring ahead of the pack. Chase Garbers is on campus now as a freshman. All three of those guys will have a chance to earn the job.

It's very competitive right now. We haven't named a starter. I don't know when that time will be. It will present itself when it does. We're excited. They've had really good off-seasons and they're all a little bit different. All those guys will have the opportunity to earn the right to play.

**Q. Are there any updates with Brandon McIlwain's eligibility?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: He will be joining us this weekend. That's about all I can tell you right now.

**Q. What do you see in the secondary so far?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: We think there's some good players

in our second. There are guys that have played some, like you had mentioned. There are some younger guys who came on in spring and really grew. Gerald Alexander, our secondary coach, has really done a great job teaching those guys and coaching them.

I think those guys are going to play well, and we're going to need them to play well. They made progress throughout spring. We had 15 practices. Like I told you at the beginning, the beginning, from day one of spring practice to day 15, it looked like two different sports. It was a lot of growth and progress. And we'll have to continue to do the same thing throughout fall camp and really through the season, and that's what it's all about.

**Q. Am I correct that when you were at USC you recruited Sam Darnold as a linebacker?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: You're incorrect.

**Q. I'm incorrect, okay.**

JUSTIN WILCOX: He's a really good quarterback.

**Q. That he is.**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah.

**Q. Do you still keep in touch with people at USC?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I saw him this morning. I still have some friends that are coaching there.

**Q. Do you think it's -- maybe easier isn't the right word. So many teams use spread, no-huddle offense. It seems maybe five, ten years ago there is a perception of a change of practice routine. Now that everyone does that, is it a little bit easier to prepare for you to defend?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I think the more carryover you see from week to week, the more familiar you're going to be with those formations and plays and that type of thing.

Part of what drew me to Beau Baldwin is our offense will be that way. There will be multiple, there will be multiple in their groupings, will be multiple in their formations, and that benefits us as a team because now your team is practicing against it. So I think the more you do that, it's a complementary program. Your offense complements your defense, not only on the field during games but in practice.

And defensively we'll be multiple as well. We'll have 3-4 spacing, we'll have four-down spacing, we'll have post coverage, split safety coverage. So when the offense goes against that and the quarterbacks see that, that prepares them for what they're going to see during the season.

**Q. You had some overlap with Sam Darnold in your time at USC. You're on the defensive side?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: He was our scout team quarterback.

**Q. What do you remember about him in those early days, if anything?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: A great guy, first and foremost. Competitor. Loves the game, very talented. Comes from a great family.

**Q. Could you tell that there was maybe something special about him at all?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I mean, that's always hard. You know, you would love to sit up here and say, oh, yeah, I knew he was going to be like that. Nobody really knows. But he's a really talented guy and deserves all the praise. They did a great job, and he did a great job last year.

**Q. You've been a part of some coaching staffs that really excelled in recruiting. How do you feel your staff now is shaping up in that regard?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah. We know what we're looking forward in recruiting. We all believe in the same things, kind of the profile of the guy that's going to be best for our program. We feel like, as I said before, we're going to start in the Bay Area and move out from there. Our coaching staff does a really good job of identifying the characteristics not only athletically but character-wise and academically of the guys that fit within our program, and that's key.

**Q. Is that a big thing, just staying in that local area? Because I know that was a big thing with the previous staff.**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, we want to recruit local, and there are a lot of reasons for that. That doesn't mean -- it will change year to year. You just don't really know. It depends. Some years it will be more than others.

But we're going to make sure and do that. Like I said, there are a number of reasons for that. We've got a great recruiting department, and our staff did a really nice job in spring. Talking to recruits, the guys we're talking to now, they're really, really good conversations, and we're looking forward to keeping -- keep working with that.

**Q. To kind of go along those same lines, what do you do as a coaching staff to vet recruits? Do you run background checks with your players?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I think the more information that you can get, you know, and how you get it, it's just a lot of conversations and phone calls and really covering all your bases. Talking not only to the high school coach but the counselors and anybody you can talk to, associate with, just to get a background.

Because you're trying to make significant decisions on people in your program, which is everything, you know? Recruiting is everything.

So you have to have the information, whether it's the academics, the character. The football in a lot of ways is the easiest thing because you put the video on. But now you've got to find out what type of guy is he? Does he love football or does he love being a football player? Those are two different things. Academically, does he work in the classroom? Does he truly want to get a degree? A lot of people say they do, but do his actions back that up? So there is a lot to that.

**Q. Was having two coordinators with head coaching experience, was that something that you wanted as a first-time head coach? How much of an asset is that?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, really didn't set out to hire them because they were head coaches. They were really what was best for our program. We put our coaching staff together, and they all complement each other in different ways.

I really can kind of talk about each member of our coaching staff and how they're going to benefit our program and our players. Having Beau and Tim, and having their background and their experiences, it's great for us.

It's my job to be the head coach. I think those guys are actually excited to get back to coaching offense and defense and really being involved with that.

But I'd like to think we create an environment where we're learning from everybody, everybody in our program, coaches and players both, and it will be my job at the end of the day to make the decisions, and I'm totally comfortable with that.

**Q. (Indiscernible) Darren Carrington was removed from the team. As a first-time head coach, how do you meet expectations as a head coach and letting guys know where the red lines are and what is acceptable and what isn't? How hard is it to create that culture and tone early on?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I think that's a critical thing you just said, as you set expectations and hold them to it. How do you get that done? You wish it was in one meeting. There is not some magic dust that you sprinkle over them and all of a sudden they get everything you said. I think it's just over time that you're consistently pushing the same message in how we're going to operate.

It takes more than one meeting. It takes more than a

week or a month. It takes some time.

**Q. Do you think guys at this point in your program are getting it or have gotten it?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: It's really a tribute to them. Getting them there, and their willingness to accept change, because everything was brand new to them, from their strength and conditioning, to the offense and defense and special teams, just how we operated. It's not saying how they did it before was wrong, but we're just going to do it differently. I think their attitude and their willingness to accept that change -- and it's never perfect. You know, it never is with that many people. But I think their attitude has been key.

**Q. (Indiscernible) as now an employee, he's a guy that you grew up around, is it odd to have that relationship and to be his boss?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: No. I think the world of Steve Greatwood. I have for a long time. He actually -- I've known him for a number of years. He coached my older brother.

First and foremost, he's just a great human being. He treats the players well. I think his track record as a coach speaks for itself. We're fortunate to have him, along with the rest of the members of our staff. It's enjoyable to go to work with those guys every day.

**Q. What's been the most surprising thing that you've encountered since you became a head coach?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: That's a great question. Yeah. Probably the number of conversations that you have. Because when you're the defensive coordinator, you talk to the other defensive coaches and the offensive coaches sometimes when you're not battling over the script, you know, you talk with the players, a lot of the defensive players for the most part.

And that changes. The number of conversations and how much you talk, you know, how much you talk changes. But it's been really energizing to go through this process, and it's all about the people. We've got great support from our administration. I'm totally comfortable in the position. I'm just excited to get back to work and check in on Sunday and go to practice on Monday. That's what I'm really looking forward to.

**Q. Are you going to miss the two-a-days? Are you going to miss no more two-a-days, or is that a good thing?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, I think there is probably some more conversation to be had on that, honestly. I think there's a way you can operate two-a-days and still, you know, be mindful of the student-athlete and the demand you're putting on them physically, but also not

maybe stretch it out quite as long.

We're totally comfortable with our schedule that we put together for fall camp. We had to tweak it a little bit because of rule changes, and we're fine with that. But I think there is probably something more there you could discuss.

**Q. Do you have a memory from two-a-days that kind encompasses what that is?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, you don't want to be that guy that's like: When we did two-a-days it was 43 in a row. I don't want to be that person. But I do have distinct memories of two-a-days, yeah.

**Q. Did you catch up with Coach (indiscernible) yet?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: I did. I got to see Coach Beet (phonetic) this morning at breakfast. He's been so great to me for a number of years. Again, knowing him, probably over 20 years now, and think the world of him. Was fortunate to get to work for him. It will be great to compete against him.

**Q. Are there some things over the years where you were kind of implementing into your program now?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: Yeah, you're influenced by everybody you're around. And being around him for a long time, it's taken a lot of different -- not only maybe just football, but how to interact with people and humility and the work ethic and so many things that he stands for.

I was fortunate to work for Paul Chryst last year who I learned so much from. And really all the stops along the way, I've gotten a chance to learn from a lot of people. I think you take all those experiences and make them your own and develop your own way and not try to be somebody else.

**Q. (Indiscernible) to kind of get the program where they are now?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: No, not at all.

**Q. In this age of social media, how much stock do you put in on how much content they're putting out there?**

JUSTIN WILCOX: A lot of it, it's their own thing. Yeah, so I am not an active social media member, but we have people that mind that constantly, and we're very interested in what guys are saying.

Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of great things about it in promoting their team and how much -- it's just part of their world, which is great. But we want to make sure that we know what we're getting, so that's another avenue for us to do some research on these guys.