

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 26 2017



## Jim Mora UCLA Bruins

### **Q. How did he come on the radar, and what he came to do?**

JIM MORA: He came on the radar, Jedd Fisch, our offensive coordinator, had experience with him in Miami, and we got wind that he had graduated and was looking to be a graduate transfer. So, you know, we started to communicate with him, and it just worked out where he came to UCLA.

I will tell you this, I think it was a very big acquisition for us, not just because he's massive, but because he gives us some experience, and it allows us to go to the gap. You know, with Kolton Miller at left tackle and Sunny at right tackle, you've got a couple of large men that are athletic and have experience. It allows us to do some things inside at the guard position. You guys know that we had Kenny working at tackle through the spring. Andre James played tackle when Kolton got hurt last year.

So we have some flexibility that we didn't have. It's going to be important for us to stay healthy. But we'd like to always -- we'd like to be able to go through a season with your starting five intact. That's not always realistic. But we need to do a really good job in the next three or four weeks in trying to develop some depth.

And I believe we've got some young men that can step up and really progress and have progressed. Burton, who switched from offensive line to defensive line, has seemed to make a really good transition. Michael Alves, who is a young man who I think will develop into a guy that can play. Paco Perez, you know, healthy.

So I think that there are some good things happening there, but it's still very much a question.

### **Q. (Question regarding summer workouts.)**

JIM MORA: The players have done a tremendous job. Number one, it starts with Coach Alosi and our organized, mandatory workouts and the lifting, the conditioning, the recovery.

Our players have had -- we've had 25 player-run practices where everybody's there. They've got a script. They're doing individual, they're doing one-on-one, they're doing team, they're doing seven-on-seven,

or Skelly as some people call it. And we're not allowed to watch it. Regulations do not permit coaches to watch film or anything like that and evaluate it. I don't even know that we're allowed to ask a guy.

But our players have volunteered to meet, and it's been very, very productive. The young guys come in in the summer and have embraced it. And that put us ahead of where we've been in the past, because we've never had this many. So I think it will be a good thing. I think it creates ownership for the players. They're having to teach each other. They're having to work with each other. They're having to compete and cooperate at the same time.

### **Q. How important is it to have leadership, especially on defense?**

JIM MORA: Very important. Kenny's very well respected by all of our coaches, certainly the players. He's a very serious young man. He's team oriented, goal driven. He's accomplished a lot of great things at UCLA both on and off the field.

I think one of the things I'm most proud of are the things that he's been able to do academically. But he's a serious guy, and winning is important to him. Being on the right type of team is important to him. I think it's a great example for not only our young players but our entire community.

### **Q. How do you feel about the offense with the new coaches?**

JIM MORA: I feel good. I think that I continue to feel good. But it's a good group of men. Jedd Fisch has tremendous pedigree. He's worked with three Super Bowl-winning head coaches in Brian Billick, Mike Shanahan, and Pete Carroll. He's also worked with Steve Spurrier and Jim Harbaugh, as well as many great assistants, and has a very clear idea of what we want to be offensively.

It's great to get DeShaun Foster back in the fold. He has a tremendous influence on our players. Jimmie Dougherty comes in as a receiver coach. I had a chance to watch him coach when he was at the University of Washington and I wasn't coaching. And Coach came to practice, and I loved his energy. Our players have really taken to him.

Bringing in Hank Fraley as the offensive line coach who has played in the NFL, he did it really probably less on talent and more on technique and intelligence and work ethic. Coached in the NFL, coached in college.

It's a good staff. I'm excited about it.

**Q. Regarding a couple of big-time kids in Jaelan Phillips and Darnay Holmes, what kind of impact can they bring?**

JIM MORA: We're fortunate they've both been able to come for winter quarter. So they were able to go through winter conditioning and they were able to go through spring practice. So they got those 15 practices plus these 25, 26 player-run practices that they'll have before camp. So they're going to have 40 practices under their belt before we start next week.

So I think that will contribute to them being able to be impactful as freshmen. They're both talented young men. They're mature. They're competitive. I think that they both have a chance to see a lot of time. They'll push for starting positions. And we're not afraid to play them, if they're the guys who can be successful.

**Q. Will player development for Darnay go both ways?**

JIM MORA: We have to move slowly. We need him to master something. We need him to master being the defensive back at corner and nickel. But fortunately he's very smart, and I know that Jedd is very creative. We will have packages for him. We just have to make sure we're monitoring it so we give Darnay the best chance to have the individual success. You want a guy like that to have the ball in his hands.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

JIM MORA: Well, we just focus on ourselves. And we acknowledge that Sam's a great player. It's fun to have two great quarterbacks in the same city, in the same conference.

But what's important for us is to try to be the best we can be. That's what we can control. We can't control Sam. But I know this, he's fun to watch. He's not fun to compete against because he's tough to get down, and he's a heck of a competitor.

**Q. How has Josh progressed? How has their relationship progressed?**

JIM MORA: I think that he's progressed tremendously. I think it's a huge credit to Josh Rosen in the way that he's matured and the way he's approached this off-season. Just like all these young men, they get it at different times. I think a lot of things factored into Josh having the productive off-season that he's had, certainly being injured and having football kind of

removed from his life as a player at the time that he did, that affected him. Humbling himself to a certain degree and accepting coaching.

I think he's been asked a couple times is it helpful or hurtful that he's on his third coordinator, quarterback coach. For some it might be hurtful. For Josh I think it's helpful because he loves information. He loves to absorb information.

You talked about (indiscernible) a coach that came in and coordinated an offense and I believe holds almost every offensive record in UCLA history. He had a sense about him, a calm about him that I think Josh learned from. And then to bring in Marques Tuiaosopo, he played the position and played it with grit and determination and so much success, and they could relate to each other and bounce things off each other.

Now to have a person like Jedd with his pedigree and his background and the people he's coached for and the players that he's coached. It's all building this very strong platform for Josh that I really think he has embraced. I see a very strong relationship there.

**Q. How did you personally deal with a losing season, and how do you evaluate and move on from it?**

JIM MORA: It's hard. You're not in this to do anything but try to have success. And every loss rips your guts out. The first thing you do is point your finger at yourself. You say: Where did I not do a good enough job and how are we going to learn from this?

I think you make a huge mistake if you make excuses or scoop it under the rug. There are factors. But you have to look deeper than that. You have to look at everything you do, the way you meet, the way you practice, to your schemes, to how you coach, to the words you use, the culture in the building, how you let them recover. And you just pull it all apart.

You use your experience and the experience of your coaches and your colleagues. You try to put it back together in a way that will give you a chance to succeed in the future. That's what we've tried to do this off-season.

**Q. Biggest concerns going into fall camp, and where are the battles going to be fought?**

JIM MORA: I don't know that I have huge concerns other than seeing how the offensive line develops and can we create a chemistry with those five and see them play the whole year. I'm always concerned with injuries during camp because you have to find the right mix of contact and player safety, and that's always a rub there. I usually lean more towards player safety.

The biggest battles. I think the back-up quarterback position is a battle. I think we've got three really pretty good players competing for two guard positions on the offensive line. I think we need to make a decision there pretty quickly so we can get that cohesiveness I talked about.

I think that defensively, because we play more players defensively than we do offensively, it's more for maybe not the starting job but playing time. The defensive end with Jaelan Phillips and Keisean Lucier-South, or, you know, corner with Darnay and Denzel Fisher and Colin Samuel. So there's some -- and (indiscernible). Everyone wants to talk about that, but we've got competition at (indiscernible) as well.

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

JIM MORA: I'm a proponent of the elimination of two-a-days. I think adding the days that they did to the front end of the practice schedule, while it's been a challenge because it happened late, it's forced us to, even up until today, adjust how we're going to practice, when we're going to practice. Now our players are in school when they wouldn't be (indiscernible) facing challenges, but I think it's all worth it.

I think we have to be conscious of player safety. When you see a study that came out the other day with the deceased NFL players' brains that they studied and you saw the high rate of CTE, that doesn't just happen when they go to the NFL, that starts at an early age. So we have to be conscious of those things.

These are young men we're dealing with, and player safety has to be a premium. The percentage of these young men that go on and make a living at this is miniscule. So I'm in agreement with it, very much so.

**Q. Oregon has seen an uptick in recruiting, and they've put a major focus on social media. What are your thoughts on social media and using it for recruiting?**

JIM MORA: For recruiting, it's necessary. Recruiting is not over yet. Recruiting is ongoing until the fax comes in or the email comes in. I don't think you can judge success or failure in recruiting. Then you have to go a few years down the line, because it's necessary. It's how kids communicate now. They're not going to adjust to us; we have to adjust to them. So that means an old guy like myself has to learn to use Snapchat or, you know, communicate in different ways, different forms, then that's something that I have to do.

**Q. How would you rate your social media game?**

JIM MORA: Mine?

**Q. Yeah.**

JIM MORA: I'm probably a C. I'm glad that we can text with players now. Because I was having trouble communicating in 140 characters on Twitter. I like Instagram. You know, I put some pictures out there. I think that for me voice-to-voice communication is always the best way to communicate. It leaves less room for error and interpretation.

**Q. How is your running game and how are the wide receivers?**

JIM MORA: Our running game was awful, and I'm hopeful that it will be improved and get back to where it was the first few years we were together as a staff. I feel good about the direction it's headed. I think we've got good backs. We've got a good scheme. It's well coached. And the players understand and we understand that it needs to be better.

The receivers, I think it's a good group. I think it's a solid group. I think there is a need for us to find a way to develop more consistency. And receivers have to catch the ball. That's the job number one, to catch the ball. Some might say get open and catch the ball, but if you get open and can't catch the ball, getting open doesn't matter.

So we've worked really hard and done a lot of things and just said, hey, you've dropped a few. The way we utilize the JUGS machine or different devices on our eyes to try to help these guys just get more consistent catching the ball. But I like our group.

**Q. What about your team speed, especially on offense?**

JIM MORA: You know what, we can run. We can run. Our receivers can run. You know, Eldridge Massington ran in the Pac-12 Championships in our 4-by-100 team, ran well. Theo can run. Darren Andrews can run. I don't want to leave -- if I leave someone out, it's easy to say: You said I couldn't run. I didn't say you couldn't run, I just said the guys that can run.

I think it's good. I don't know where it would rank amongst others, but I don't see a (indiscernible).

**Q. (Off microphone)?**

JIM MORA: Denzel is back. He's full speed. DeChaun is not. DeChaun will not be able to start camp on the field. He'll be in treatments still with his shoulder. Zach Bateman is coming off a foot and is not yet cleared 100 percent, but feeling better. Other than those two --

**Q. (Indiscernible)?**

JIM MORA: (Indiscernible) is good to go. Paco's good to go. Austin's fine. The only two guys that right now it looks like have any issues are -- well, Alex with the

knee, you know he's going to miss this year with the knee. Zach Bateman, who we expect back soon. And who was the third one you mentioned?

**Q. DeChaun.**

JIM MORA: Oh, DeChaun Holiday. I don't know at what point DeChaun will be back. I know he's working hard to get back.

**Q. Coach, you spoke a little bit about CTE. What to you say to the parents who sit down and look you in the eye and say they're concerned about their kids?**

JIM MORA: I say I understand your concerns because I have kids that play football and play contact sports. I also have been involved with two companies that work in that industry. I know you've heard of the company VICIS. I'm a part of that company. So I've been lucky over the last eight years to get pretty detailed information on where we are in terms of progress and diagnosing, treating, dealing with head injuries and technology in the market.

I tell them that we don't play with head, neck and spine injuries. We don't make mistakes there. If there is any indication that their son has a head, neck or spine injury, they would be removed immediately regardless of the consequences to the team, because their health is more important than anything.

I also say at UCLA we're on the cutting edge of technology in all of those areas. We need to give them the best care, the best treatment, the best resources, the best equipment. And it's like (indiscernible), but a head injury, if allowed to heal properly, you can get back on the field.

The problem is you can't see it. When somebody sprains an ankle or hurts a shoulder, you can see it. You can monitor a recovery. With a head injury, it's more difficult. But once again, at UCLA we're dealing with some really great and innovative things when it comes to analyzing head injuries.

**Q. Are you guys still using those helmets?**

JIM MORA: Not right now. There's a lot of different things in the market right now. Some work and some don't. We're trying to find the best products to keep our players safe.