

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 26 2017

## Chris Petersen Washington Huskies

CHRIS PETERSEN: Afternoon, everybody. Excited to be here. Football season right around the corner. I think we feel excited about our chances this year. We've got some good returning players.

Two of them are here today. Linebacker Keishawn Bierria, Narbonne High School, out of the area, and our quarterback Jake Browning from Folsom High School. I think those two guys have done a great job all summer with leadership things, helping our team improve through the summer when coaches aren't around.

And on Monday we get a chance to get started and get after it. That being said, fire away.

### **Q. Chris, when you were recruiting Jake, how much did you look at his offense?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I think for the most part we're always looking at skill set. It's probably the first thing that gets us in the door. Then most importantly after that is his mentality. The quarterback position, I think the physical parts of the quarterback position are completely overrated. So we felt really good about certainly how he threw the ball, but we're more excited about how he thought about the game and processed the game.

### **Q. What do you mean by the physical aspects are overrated?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: I think height, and arm strength and all that, foot speed. I think it's overrated. It's important, but it's overrated. That's what everybody gets so excited about. The best of the best, they're accurate throwers, great decision makers, and awesome in the pocket in tight spaces.

### **Q. When it comes to maintaining consistency in the program, what are the barriers to that? What makes it difficult?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: You know, I think talent is probably the number one. I think that's what I think about for us. I think we've got really good guys that know how we operate and are all about those type of things. So I think if you get the injury bug and those type of things, you're always going to have to recoup.



We lost some really good players off this last team. But everybody has that. We've got to get the young guys going. So we feel good about that. But if we can stay relatively healthy, that's the main thing about it.

I think our guys will work hard. I think they'll practice hard. They're really dialled into how we do that, so feel good about that. Got to have a little bit of luck like we had last year and stay relatively healthy. I think every coach says the same thing. I think maybe there's a couple programs that can withstand a bunch of injuries, and they've got those, just that next-level talent that needs an opportunity. Most aren't like that. We've got to develop these guys for a little bit.

### **Q. Is everybody 100 percent ready to go on Monday?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, yeah, I think we're good.

### **Q. What led up to the hiring (indiscernible) been at Northwestern knows the conference really well. He bounced around a couple times in a short amount of time.**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Right. Jonathan Smith had a really good relationship with him. I had never worked with him. I had bounced around and had contact with him way back when he was at Oregon State and I was at Oregon, so I've known him for a long time. I always thought he did a really, really nice job. But then just the people that he coached with that we knew thought the fit would be really good.

I think that's what it's all about, not only in the recruiting process, but coaches going certain places, it's like that's the trick. It's like, do you fit that crew? I think on both sides, even though he hadn't worked with us, kind of both all felt like he would be a really good fit.

### **Q. Is he a guy that you got a recommendation about how you would fit together?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, absolutely. I think there were a couple others as well. Certainly Jonathan Smith and that connection there too. I mean, Jonathan knows who fits us and who wouldn't. He's been great. He's been a really good addition.

### **Q. Obviously, he's got the title as a coach. But how much of a hand does he have in 2017?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, we do things very

collaborative. Again, talking about the part of our style, we've never been one where the coordinator goes into his office and comes in and says this is what I'm seeing. It doesn't even kind of work like that. There are a couple guys studying the pass game, and they're putting it together. Couple guys studying the run game, and putting it together. And the coordinator certainly has his hands in everything.

But you can only do so much. So he'll have his hands on it. We need a guy that's very involved and very experienced and seeing a lot of good things. You know, it's hard to find the right fit, I think, because we are looking for this like really elite coach that can coach him on the field, tactical, all those things. We're also looking for a guy that can think like a coordinator. Has been a coordinator, and maybe the most important piece is a really good recruiter. It's easy to find pieces of that, but to really have the whole, I think those guys are fewer between. So we were excited when we thought we could get him.

**Q. Last year you had a couple of great runs and couple great teams playing and you were very proud of your guys play. Do you think you can have a repeat performance coming up this season?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I don't know. We'll just have to see. We feel good about our guys. They've been working really hard. But we've got a lot of -- the fall camp will be really important to see how we come out of that. Then the first couple games to see how we are.

I just don't believe in -- I don't think you reload. That's not our mentality at all. At all. We rebuild. That's just the mindset. We're not even kind of the same team we were last year. So that's always our process. We start from ground zero. We take nothing for granted, how we coach them from spring ball to fall camp to everything. We see how it kind of goes there.

We're excited about these guys. We think we've got some talented guys. But we've got a lot of things in front of us still.

**Q. What do you think about the elimination of two-a-day practices?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: I think a couple things about that. We really haven't done two-a-days for a long time. We had a thing where we did have a ball, it was very controlled, not in pads when we did two-a-day last year, and I think it was awesome. I'm really discouraged that they took that away from us. I think they haven't done enough research to figure out -- and I know our team doctors did see what we did in our, quote, two-a-days, and it was one of the best things we did in terms of mentally get them along.

I think it's bad that we're bringing our guys in earlier now to have less time off. Coaches have less time off. Now we're there even longer. I think that's a negative. I think there could have been a much better way. Don't put the pads on, and now you can still condense things and get a lot of things done.

**Q. After spring ball you had a chance to go back and dissect every practice. What did you see out of the secondary? What did you see out of Byron Murphy and all the guys?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I think what we see is flashes. Like, really good flashes of talent. It's there. It's like anything, it just has to get consistent. All the guys back there. Especially at that position. You know how one play is the last line of defense.

So, yeah, we were excited. I think they all got better. I hope they got better since then. And they'll get better in this fall camp process, and we'll see where we are from there.

This is kind of one of the exciting things I think about college football; that you lose these players and you've got to replace them. I think what's exciting is when you've got some guys that are talented, that care, you've seen them do some really good things, and now it's a matter of building that consistency.

**Q. When does it start creeping in for you? Around July 4th, it starts creeping in and you're ready to get going?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, it is what it is. So you just kind of make that in your mind whatever the day is. Okay. Let's go, it's time. And you just go, yeah.

**Q. When it comes to recruiting, a lot of teams are putting emphasis on social media, specifically Oregon. What are your thoughts on social media?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: We don't have enough time to talk about that question, what I really think about social media and recruiting. You know, it's the world we live in. It's the world the kids live in, certainly. I think there are some really good things about it where you can get information quickly on both sides, and I think there are some things that make it really hard on the kids that they don't really know makes it hard on them in this long recruiting process.

Yeah, I think it's, you know, the Millennials, the kids we're dealing with now, not just football players, I think it's harder on the football players certainly with the limelight and the attention that's on them for such a long time. It's going to be a hard process to navigate that whole thing.

**Q. What is your philosophy when you're scheduling the playoffs, what is your philosophy on the ideal non-conference schedule?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I don't really have like an exact philosophy on that. I know the fans and people like to see good teams come into the stadium and play, and it's really hard to get. Like even if you had an ideal, it's almost like who is available? Who wants to play? And it's five years from now is what we're talking about.

So even if we had a really like legit philosophy on how it wants to look, it's really hard to get that done. Jen Cohen, our athletic director, says what do you think about these guys? And it's like, yeah, okay. It's kind of like that. And you don't know what they're going to be like in five years too. And it's like, oh, those guys are really good, do we want to play those guys? Well, five years is like light years. It's completely different. Or somebody that was struggling a little bit, and then we say let's play them. Then you have coaches through there and by the time you play them, they're really good. So it's kind of hard. The choices are just really limited.

**Q. Larry Scott mentioned about shortening halftime as well as speeding up the game. Do you have any input on that?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: No.

**Q. How do you feel about it?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: I love it. I can't stand how long the college football game is. I don't like the games at all. You do a drive, you've got to wait. You do a first down, you've got to wait for another commercial. That's painful. As painful as it is to everybody watching the game maybe at home, that's why people can just press pause, go get something to eat, and fast forward through all the stuff that's paying the bills. But the shorter we can make it in terms of -- we want to play and just keep playing. We don't want to sit in the locker room a long time. We don't need a bunch of time to warm up. And however we can shorten the game, I'm all for it.

**Q. What type of impact has making the playoffs had for you guys on recruiting?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: I think it's really similar. When I say that, I think what got us to the playoffs was those kid that we recruited a handful of years ago. We're still looking for those type of guys. We know exactly what we're looking for.

So I think by being at Washington, it's always been pretty good. It's a really attractive place. You know, certainly winning more obviously helps that process. But you've got to win for a while for it to really make a

significant difference. But I think being in Washington makes a significant difference. We can get good players there.

**Q. Will you broaden the amount of players you'll try to go after?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: We're not trying to broaden anything. We're not trying to go across the nation. That makes it hard on your coaches and to get good information. We know our footprint.

**Q. The last couple weeks Oregon dismissed one of the more notable players, Darren Carrington. I'm just curious, how do you go about establishing your standards when you take over a team, the importance of letting the guys know where your red lines are and your experience?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, it's a really important and painful part of the job, for sure. But you've got to do it. And every coach has their way of doing things and their standards. You just try to educate the guys as well as you can. Then a guy's got to make good decisions.

It's tough. It's a hard process. It's tough on the kids because guys are going to make mistakes, and it's so public. It's a hard thing. But it's important part of the job, for sure.

**Q. You hear about some programs sending out text messages reminding guys on weekends to be smart, be careful, do you guys do that? How often do you tell the guys to be conscious about what they're doing?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Every single day. That's what we're all about is like not only trying to develop really good football players, but really good people in terms of operating. I know that sounds good sitting here, and guys are going to make mistakes, they're human beings and young kids, but every single day that's part of our program and what we're doing.

**Q. In your experience is it possible for a redshirt freshmen to step in and contribute in that way or do you think it's going to be (indiscernible)**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Well, whoever is out there I think is going to play at a high level and be a really good player. It might be multiple guys. But we're not into comparing what this guy was like compared to Kevin King or Sidney Jones. What we're into is the standard, what the standard looks like. How we practice, how we operate, how we use those techniques. And the standard is the best that that kid's got, every single day. That's good enough for us.

We have good enough talent. So if we can bring his best every day and continually try to change that standard, that's good enough for us. So it's always

about whoever is out there. It's not about the guys we've had in the past. The standard will be good enough if you can bring your standard every day.

**Q. Coach, you gave Justin Wilcox his start as defensive coordinator back in 2006. What are your thoughts on him as a coach and taking over at Cal?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I wish I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have to play him probably. No, Justin's always like -- heck, I was a coach when he was a player. I've known him forever. He was one of those special guys that was good as a player just in terms of as a person. Got a chance to hire him. Knew he would do awesome, which he did. He'll be a really good head coach as well. It's just a matter of time of him getting his way, getting his guys in there and doing that.

Really happy for him. He's done some really good things and done it the right way, and he deserves the opportunity.

**Q. Talk about the offensive change.**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, every time you get a new coach in there, that whole chemistry really changes. And nobody likes change. You don't like change. Players don't like. No one want to get out of what they know and all those things. But once you embrace that, that's such an awesome thing. You look at things a different way.

One thing about Scott Huff, he's such a people person. So I knew that was going to be a really easy transition. They come from -- Chris Strausser and Scott Huff, they come from the same lineage, same philosophy. Same way.

And everybody has their unique way of doing it. So it wasn't like it was this massive overhaul of techniques and terminology and all those things. But the personalities are all different, and it takes the guys a minute to get used to them. But it usually takes guys about three minutes to get used to and comfortable with Scott Huff just by the nature of his personality.

**Q. Do you remember what he said to you the first time you laid eyes on Trey Adams?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: No. Did he say something to you?

**Q. No, but I know what I think.**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, he's been around and he's seen what we have. Playing against those guys and all that. Yeah.

**Q. Coach, you talk about how it's tough to draw the lines with players. Does it make it harder?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, those are always unique

twists to the story, for sure. You know, I mean, we've all got our own issues we've got to deal with. That's Oregon and Utah's issue right now. But, yeah, those are interesting twists to the story.

**Q. I was wondering what impact you think he could potentially have, haven't seen him.**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Oh, he's a good player now. He's going to have an impact for sure. There is no doubt about that.

**Q. How much weight do you put into social media and something that may be inappropriate?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, it all matters. It definitely matters. I mean, we're just trying to find the right guys for us. It doesn't mean the kid's a bad kid. It could mean that. But we're looking for a certain fit to our program and what their mentality's all about.

I think the NFL's the same way. I know the NFL, a lot of those teams are categorizing tweets and looking at how many times a kid tweets a day and what those tweets are about and all that type of stuff. I think that paints a picture and it does matter.

**Q. In your experience what is the toughest part about staying there when you reach that level where you compete for championship. What has to happen to kind of maintain that?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I think it is really, really hard to stay. Is it harder to get there or harder to stay there? I think it's harder to stay there because you've got to do those things over and over and over for a long period of time. That's what I'm saying. Most people can't do these hard things over and over and over for a long period of time. It's probably easier that you can do the hard things over and over for a shorter period of time.

Can we do it again next year? That's hard. I think we all get that. So you've got your way of doing things. And a little luck along the way to stay relatively healthy for some key guys. All those type of things. I just go back, and I said this before, I look at our season, and we play our first league game against Arizona. We go into overtime and barely get out of there. Our season goes well, and Arizona's doesn't go as well. They had a bunch of injuries, you know, we didn't have a bunch of injuries.

So it can change that fast. You lose a couple guys and it affects a couple more guys. I mean, we've all been there and seen that. So, there's just a lot of things that got to line up. You could have everything just right, and the injury bug. How do you get a bunch of turnovers or not turn the ball over? Everybody works on that and everybody's trying to figure out how to stay healthy. Well, how do you do that better? Half the time it's just

luck.

**Q. Looking at what coach Mac has done at CU what are your impressions?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, and then we played them two years ago, and didn't play them, but we watched a lot of their tape. And we knew two years ago they were going to be good.

We know some of the coaches on that staff, we know the type of guys that they had. We knew who. And you could just feel it. So what they did wasn't surprising to me. We knew they were getting better. Some of the things they were doing growing their program. We were going through some of the same stuff.

**Q. You've got two outstanding running backs coming back. tell me a little about your running backs and what does that do for Jake.**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I think he's good. We've got a good stable of running backs. Not only those two guys, but the kids we red-shirted, and Salvon coming in, that's a strong crew right there. Those guys will be good. It starts on the O-line. You want to talk about the run game, that's where we need to start and finish with, is the O-line. The backs will do their own thing.

**Q. What was the toughest part about getting there (to the championship) for your program?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: It's hard to get there. What's hard is getting your way of doing everything established and engrained. Like you don't tell the guys this is how we're going to be. It's like putting a play up there, everybody's got it, and you don't work on it and talk about it every day, so it takes time. It takes setbacks. It takes explaining and learning all that stuff.

So all that takes time. That's a rough process when you're trying to get everybody going on that. Once it starts to go, it gets easier, and then you can't take your eyes off this is how it is. You can't let little things go. You will stray off course. But once you start getting it going, you know, it's an easier process than getting there. Now to stay there, you know, I think that's a whole different skillset than getting there. And I think that's what people got to figure out.

**Q. Can you reflect on your time with Justin Wilcox and were there things you saw in him that told you he would be a good head coach someday?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, I've known Justin as a player when I was coaching him as a player. He's just always been a really special person, just how he was with his teammates and how he approached the game. When we hired him, you know, he's smart and he's passionate about things and he treats people right. I

mean, you can really just stop there. They've got those qualities and stay after it, good things are going to happen, and that's what he's really done. He'll be a good head coach.

**Q. With the roster and nutrition or any surprise additions we can anticipate?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: Yeah, we might have a couple kids, couple walk-on guys. We'll talk about on Sunday or whenever we go back there and have that other one.

**Q. Anyone leave the program?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: No scholarship guys.

**Q. What do you expect from Sean?**

CHRIS PETERSEN: The running backs are always -- that haven't played in games, are always a little bit harder to tell because we don't tackle our guys very much in practice. But everything that we've seen and what he's done, like he had a good -- did a nice job in the fall red-shirting. And then watching him in spring ball, he's got a really unique knack.

I think he's got very good vision, which is more like the key characteristics in our opinion for a running back. Like what is the vision like? He always seems to be finding the right crease. So I think he's going to be an interesting one to watch.