

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 25 2018

## Kevin Sumlin Arizona Wildcats

**Q. What type of -- coming over here, what type of athletes, student-athletes are you looking for to rebuild the program here?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Well, I think it's the same as we've done at the last two stops. I think we've shown the ability to recruit and develop student-athletes athletically and academically.

That doesn't really change. We've played at different levels, even at the University of Houston, and playing SEC and Big 12 teams and winning those games and being in the other league.

Our recruiting philosophy is not going to change. Hopefully we can retain because of our location the great players in this state. But obviously we're going to have to branch out and be in California and be back in Texas and all points in between.

**Q. Good thing you've got that Texas experience and you're familiar with that environment?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Yeah.

**Q. Here on the West Coast, what are you looking to bring to the team to kind of change that make-up outside of the players, the model, the team dynamic, the focus?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Yeah, that's all part of what you do, your communication with your players. I think that it wasn't completely broken either. Everybody looks at things in different ways. We've got some dynamic players on the team, one of the most explosive players in the country right now, and there are others like them.

You look back at our season last year and just looking at where we were with six, seven, eight freshmen, they're single, first-year players on the field, on defense that can be -- that's bad. They say the best thing about a freshman is he becomes a sophomore.

It's different for us in football. We don't have one and done. So those guys when they're on the field, they're doing their thing. So we've got a young team, fortunately a lot of guys that have played, and I think our energy level, because of that, is high. These guys are a work in progress. But I like how they've worked since we've been there.



**Q. Final question, what is the advantage that Arizona brings that you can sell? What is the advantage there?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Oh, Tucson. We've got a great university. Just a fabulous campus. I think as people get to know more and more about what our campus looks like, what our brand of football is like, what our administration is about with President Robbins and Dave Heeke is our athletic director, there is a vision there, a vision that they communicated clearly to me that they want to win and compete for championships in all sports, including football.

In a lot of places you get that, but we've always started on an indoor practice facility, and going through a bunch of stadium renovations right now. So, you know, I've done this long enough to know that in certain places they'll tell you that before you get there. As a football coach, you learn what the word "rendering" means, because that's up there for two years. Park a bulldozer out there for two years and wait for the money to come in. But we've already started.

I think that shows their commitment, and that's what you want. You want to have a chance to compete on a level playing field with the other people in your conference, and our administration has given us that.

**Q. When you look at the family and you're trying to recruit, how much does the family role play into it? Hiring a family member to be a coach, does that serve as a benefit? Could that be a growing benefit in football as it is in basketball?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Well, first of all, you can't hire that anymore. You can't hire a family member.

**Q. Not immediate family, but --**

KEVIN SUMLIN: No, you can't generalize either. I've gotten over the last two years being head coach, there are as many single-parent homes as there are two-parent homes, maybe more. Some no-parent homes -- grandmothers, aunt, uncle, friend, guardian. So everybody's situation is unique.

I think what's important is your relationship with that young man. And then when he gets on your campus, clearly defining expectations because of their background. The way you grew up may not be as acceptable to things on this campus as the way he

grew up. So you can't take for granted anything. So we're constantly in the business of educating. We're constantly in the business of mentoring.

Then clearly defining expectations and holding people to standards. Those standards, what you may take for granted or what you think is normal, some places they aren't. That's where the educational piece comes in for us, as mentors and as coaches. Not just on the football field, but in daily life.

**Q. Then even the SEC and now Pac-12, what have you noticed in terms of how quickly the landscape changes? How fast things are going for younger and younger trending -- what is your take on the whole organization?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Well, it's been really that recruiting landscape hasn't really changed in the state of Texas. I mean, it was early. It was that way for a long time. So the evaluation process has been moved up because, basically, the ability to evaluate official visit and sign guys earlier has moved the evaluation piece up.

It's just the natural order of things. You move things up six months, and you have to evaluate this guy six months earlier, and it puts him as a sophomore. So that's where it is. I think that calendar is still evolving. We've probably had, I don't know, seven or eight, six or seven official visits back in June, which is the first year for that.

So that calendar is different. I think it's one that everybody has to adapt to, but you're going to have to because of the early signing date.

**Q. Do you feel a difference in expectations being at a Pac-12 school as opposed to the SEC?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: People have asked me that just about wherever I've been. I think my expectation is to win. It sounds kind of harsh, but I have to take care of everybody's expectations I understand what the consequences are, believe me. I set the bar high for our program, I set the bar high for our players. That's the way I've always done things. No matter what that was. As an assistant coach, as a coordinator, as a head coach.

So, you know, the only pressure that you have is what you put on yourself. Our players understand that too.

**Q. What memories do you have from being at Washington State and coaching under Mike Price and interviewing for the job in 2008?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: It -- allegedly. You guys, I have all these interviews that I was supposed to be on. You guys don't know that for sure. All right. Let's clear that up right now.

**Q. Allegedly.**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Allegedly. No, it was my first job. First I was in private business and came to Washington State in the Pac-10 as a graduate assistant. He hired me and Joe Tiller, who was the defensive coordinator at Purdue when I was a player, ironically was hired as the offensive coordinator there. And Mike Zimmer was the defensive coordinator. So me and Chris Ball, who is coaching, and Greg Olson, who is coordinator at the Oakland Raiders, we were the GAs. We did all the other work and washed cars and did whatever we did besides football.

But loved the time there. Had some great friends, even in administration. Jim Livengood was the athletic director, who ended up going to Arizona, ironically. Chris Del Conte was in there at Texas as athletic director. We have a lot of really close friends and guys that were there. So always indebted.

Mike gave me an opportunity and so did Joe, and then Joe hired me and his first head coaching job at Wyoming. I went there as a wide receiver coach, and it seems like -- it is 30 years ago. So it's a long time ago, but I'm happy to be back.

**Q. You brought up Joe Tiller. What does this legacy mean to you? What did he kind of leave behind for you and how has he impacted you?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Well, I think people have heard me say, besides my dad, he had the biggest impact on me. I knew him since I was 18 years old. Played for him at a time when the defense, only one guy could come to the sideline, and not the whole team. He would talk, and then actually had a role -- he and Mike Price being a defensive player and him being defensive coordinator. We got there, he was the OC, and he and Mike actually moved me to offense and became the head junior varsity coach. Had a guy named Drew Bledsoe who was pretty good, playing against some junior college guys.

Mike said, If you learn this offense and you know what you're doing, your job is to get this guy ready because he's going to play for us this year. He said, All right. If you do that, you're probably going to have a job the rest of your life.

He said, If he gets hurt or you don't win these games, then you'll never coach again. So that was the kind of pressure. That's pressure, see, when you don't have anything from right away. But had a great time there, I've got great friends there still.

**Q. Wanted to ask you about the opener at BYU. Kind of an interesting game there, trying to bounce**

**back. Looks like they're changing some things. Brought a new coordinator in. The challenge in this first game, it's for them too because they're up against you guys.**

KEVIN SUMLIN: That's right.

**Q. How do you prepare when you know things are going to be different the other way, the challenge of that first game?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: I mean, that's all the time. We go through this every year. Whether it's coordinators, whether it's new teams, whether it's most of the time you are playing an out-of-conference opponent the first game of the year of some sort. There's usually new coordinators, you have different things that you go through tape, you go through video. You look at different scenarios. But, you know, I think more than anything else, early in the year if you watch a lot of games, particularly early in the year, more games are lost than won.

By that, I mean you have to take care of yourself, right, and eliminate penalties. Eliminate turnovers and miss cues, and give yourself a chance. You don't have to be perfect, but there is a big sign on our building that says it's about us. It's not an arrogant thing. It's about, hey, we worry about us, because the opponents are going to change every week. Let's make sure that what we're doing is as sound as it can be, and we're doing it at the best of our ability and eliminating the types of things that can give games away. That's really important early in the year.

**Q. What is the biggest difference that you've noticed so far with Khalil versus the other quarterbacks you've coached in the past?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: He's really fast, how's that? No, he's a guy that's really explosive. I think that what he -- he's moving towards, as we were talking about, and we talked about in the spring is. Moving from being an athlete that is a quarterback, to being a quarterback that's an athlete. If that makes sense. How do you do that? And that called studying the game. Becoming a student of the game. Working and becoming a leader and accepting those roles. When you're the back-up quarterback, you know, it's really kind of a cool position because you've really got nothing to lose when you go in. You don't get yanked. You just go back to where you were, right?

So there is a little different pressure when you're a starter, and it comes with the things that are expected of you. Not just on the field, but off the field and on the sideline. So that growth is taking place because, you know, as great as his numbers are, he's really a young player and hasn't played a lot. So there is still a lot of room for improvement for him. I think he understands

that and is working hard in wanting to be a great quarterback.

**Q. Now that (inaudible)?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Well, we're going to have to -- we're managing that too, you know, because of his size. There's definitely a role. We have to -- to your point, I think as our recruiting philosophy has gone right now, we've got to build more depth on both sides of the ball in our interior. So with his size, there's obviously going to be -- you'd like to have him a hundred percent. We'll see where it is. You get back to summertime was really, really important in managing not only his rehab, but managing his weight. Then Coach Johnson is doing a good job, but we'll see where he is and get an update on where we are probably first week of camp.

**Q. Tradition is so important in football, but sometimes when you come to a program that has struggled to meet its expectations, you want to change things up a little bit. I know Mike Leach put a beach up in Pullman to get them more conditioned. Have you done anything differently to get the fans up or the players up?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: I think I've done just the opposite. I think one of the first phone calls I had was with Dick Tomey during a very, very successful period at Arizona, and really just kind of got his lay of the land of how things worked and how he was successful there, and the way he did things.

Then really tried to during spring football, had an invitation for previous players, and the players that were in Desert Storm, and looking back on, hey, look, let's rekindle this spirit. I want you around the program. It was an exciting time when you guys were here, and we want to make it an exciting time again. How do you do that? What does that look like? That outreach with the players and having them close to our players to fuel that, we might even have a uniform or two down the road with a throwback deal. I'm going just the opposite. We're looking for those days.

**Q. So you're hinting on a new uniform?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: Maybe, sometime. Maybe not this year. Maybe not this year, but I think there is one coming.

**Q. When you were looking at this job or maybe when you got it, what were your feelings about having a quarterback like Khalil to work with?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: It didn't hurt, let's put it that way. It really wasn't -- I'll just tell you this. It was more -- it was less about players than it was about the administration. I thought the division, like I said earlier, the division of Dr. Robbins and Dave Heeke, was outstanding in its championship vision and their ability to articulate that

with what they were looking for in a football program. As a coach it matched the philosophy that I had, and it was a great opportunity.

I had been out, I'd seen it before. We had shared ideas with Rich. So visually I kind of understood the place. It was just the right fit at the right time. So, like I said, it was more about our administration than it was about one player.

**Q. Historically, when you look at the Pac-12, the conference is best when there is a lot of experience across quarterback. You can probably say that about any conference.**

KEVIN SUMLIN: I think that's true in Little League too. So whatever that is.

**Q. But now you've got eight -- I think eight returning starters this season. How important is it to have someone who has got the experience at quarterback?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: We'll see, you know? I've had teams that weren't very experienced that have done well. Obviously, you want experienced teams that have been battle tested and have seen things and gone through the fire, so to speak. But, as I've told people before, I had a coach that used to say all the time: Not all experience is good experience. Right?

So we're still going to have guys that are going to compete for positions. I think the new red-shirt rule is excellent for players to be able to create more depth to play guys in any of those four games during the year, which is going to add to player safety, the way I see it, because of guys being able to get less reps, get them on and off the field, get the young guys ready to go and keep guys fresh.

So, we're going to look for, yeah, for those experienced players to lead us. But any great team, any team that's been a really good football team, depth becomes important. The only way to do that is to play some of these younger guys.

**Q. Have there been any key positions you can identify at this moment that will help you guys?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: I don't know. We're a work in progress. You've got 15 practices in the spring. It's really kind of hard to know who you are. You've got the 28 or 29 days here coming up that's going to define what we are. So that question, you know, I think we'll be able to answer that a little bit better here in the next couple three weeks.

**Q. Mandatory injury reports?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: You know me, I've never been one to put one out. So I think you know where I stand on that.

I tell you what, it's kind of a catch-22. If you've got the mandatory injury report, it's different, I understand it, at the professional level. But there's also in some situations in some schools with FERPA and things that are different in a collegiate environment than they are in the professional environment, that may or may not be legal to disclose those types of things.

So I think the jury is still out on that. I think there's some legal ramifications either way. You know, whatever happens, we're going to abide by it. But I've never -- I've never disclosed injury information in ten years of being head coach.

**Q. Do you think that because of new gambling laws this could be more of a discussion?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: It could be, yes. It could be. But I think it's going to be -- there are some legal issues either way. We'll see what happens. Whatever happens, we'll abide by it. We're in a time with a little bit of change of rules and things like that. But like I said, I think legally, either way there are some issues that are going to have to be worked out.

**Q. Is it a player safety issue as well?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: I don't know about that. I think if you're saying it's a player safety issue, and you're saying you're not trusting the coach or training staff of that institution to play players that are hurt, and so I'd be very careful with that assumption. Because nobody cares more about the players than those trainers and coaches, and it's just a different thought.

It's never been an issue. Like you said, I think there are some outside factors that have nothing to do with what's going on the field and collegiate institutions that are driving this discussion.

**Q. Traditionally, Southern Arizona has belonged to Arizona and have been ASU fighting off wolves. You've been one of those wolves coming into Arizona, getting players, good players to go out to Texas A&M. What is the plan as far as continuing --**

KEVIN SUMLIN: You said what now? The Southern Arizona was what?

**Q. Southern Arizona has typically belonged to the University of Arizona, and Central Arizona has been fighting off everybody coming in. You were one of those guys coming in and getting players. Now you're at Arizona. Is that going to be something you try to expand in Wildcat country to the rest of the state?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: We'd like to recruit the whole state. So, you know, that's where we are. I think high school football has continued to improve in the state. There's a lot of new high schools, lot of people moving there,

great coaching. We've had some success at other places and with Arizona high school football players. Because of those relationships that we already had, we're hoping to expand on those and get those guys to Tucson.

**Q. Khalil obviously had a great season last year. What have you seen in him and what are some of the things that you've asked him to improve on, or what can he improve on?**

KEVIN SUMLIN: He's a very, very young player. Like I said a few minutes ago, he's only played in seven or eight games. He's -- so, you know, we went through a whole list of things, Coach Mazzone and him about growing as a leader, growing as being a student of the game.

When you're that -- that is very, very inexperienced. So there are plenty of things that he could work on to get better, and fortunately he's the kind of guy that wants to work on those things.