

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

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David Shaw Stanford Cardinal

DAVID SHAW: First, I'll start off by saying Bryce Love didn't make it today. As many of you heard, he's taking classes right now and training, and just wanted to let him finish off this off-season. Excited that he's back. He'll have a chance to talk to everybody here shortly.

But I think talking to Bryce, in anticipation of some of the questions I may get, preparing for this year, had a lot of practice with this with Andrew Luck coming back, with Christian McCaffrey going from his sophomore, All-American year, coming back for his junior year, had a good chance to talk with Bryce to talk about this year can't be about stats. He broke a lot of records last year, did some phenomenal things last year.

This year's about him getting bigger, stronger, being more versatile, different things, adding to his game, we're not going to do the Bryce Love stat watch. That's going to be the majority of questions he's going to get during the course of the year.

Of course, you're on pace for this, and it's maybe different than it was last year. That's not going to be in our thinking and just preparing him for those questions, because that's not going to be our focus.

Our focus is going to be on having the best team we can have, the most well-rounded team we can have, the most balanced offense we can have, as well as having one of the most explosive running backs in the history of college football, because that's what that year was for Bryce, with 12 games, every single game he had at least one run of 30 yards or more, and 10 out of 12, he had runs of 50 yards or more. I don't know if that's ever happened in college football, so we don't know if it's going to happen again.

That's not going to be our focus. Our focus is going to be on what we can do every single week to make sure he's at our best and we are at our best. Ready for questions. Or did I answer them all?

Q. Were you surprised at all Bryce Love decided to return this year?

DAVID SHAW: I was not surprised. I wouldn't have been surprised either way because both had legitimate arguments for him to leave or come back. In my heart of hearts, if I had to guess what he would have done, I

would have guessed that he would have come back, just knowing what goals he has both in football and out of football.

I know he wanted to get stronger and be a little thicker, more prepared physically for the pounding of the NFL, and at the same time, I know what he wants to do off the field in his desire to go to medical school. He's ahead, way ahead academically to the point where he's got a chance to graduate the spring -- I'm sorry, the fall quarter of his senior year, which is amazing to be in human biology at Stanford University and graduate two quarters early while playing football. That's amazing. I know he takes both of those very seriously.

He'll load up on units again this year, that's just what he does. It's nothing new for him, and at the same time, play high-level football.

It didn't surprise me because I know those are two things he wants. He wants to play in the NFL. He wants to play in the NFL bad, and prepare his body for it.

At the same time, he wants to finish his degree.

Q. Most coaches in that situation say they don't really tell a player what they should do, but present him with all the information and options available? Is that how you coached him?

DAVID SHAW: Absolutely. And he's got great people. Great counsel, people to talk to, both in our building with Coach Gould, Ron Gould, our running backs coach, has been around a lot of great running backs and could guide him there, for me, having conversations with multiple guys, guys that have left, guys that have come back, his family. But even having his friends, a guy like Christian McCaffrey to bounce ideas off of: What do you think about this? What would you do? What did you think when you went through this process?

He had a lot of people to pull off of. He's a Stanford man, and he used all of his resources, and waited up until the last possible moment to make the decision. I wasn't completely surprised, but he made a decision he thought was best for him in football and out of football.

Q. How much clearer does the team pictures look with guys coming back from injuries from last year?

DAVID SHAW: Well, over the summer I get the injury reports to see where guys are, and we're getting healthier. We'll still start camp with a couple guys that are limited, which is fine. But it looks like we'll be full-go by the time we started playing. K.J. is going to be ready for day one to participate, which is great. I think Davis Mills may be a little bit after that.

Those guys missed a lot of time. But at the same time, kind of forced them to watch again and use our virtual reality and put themselves in those seven on sevens and some of those scene periods. So this is a good time to step back, watch and learn, and hopefully they get a lot of reps this summer.

Q. How are Jesse Burkett and Sean Barton doing?

DAVID SHAW: I think Sean Barton is a little ahead of Jesse. I don't know if Sean's going to start the training camp, kind of like Davis Mills, 100% right off the bat, but he's really close. He's doing all the running. He's doing all the exercises. Maybe not with the intensity that we need for everybody to be at, just yet. But he's healthy and he's excited and ready to go.

Jesse, I think, is a little behind that. We're going to be very slow and methodical. Jesse is a fifth-year senior. We're not rushing anything with you. You've been through this before. You have nothing to prove to us as a football player on our team, as a starter, as a senior, as a leader on our team. You have nothing to prove to us. Let's see if we can get your body ready for game one. So that's going to be a slower process, which we're not going to rush.

Q. In college basketball, players can train for combine and go back to school. Would you like to see college football adopt something like that?

DAVID SHAW: They're so different. The calendars are so different, the recruiting calendars are so different, and we're dealing with such different numbers. I don't know how it's feasible. In theory, I think it's a good theory, but I don't know how it's feasible to go all the way to draft day or even sometime close to draft day, when our signing day is in February.

I don't know how we go past that. Do we hold on to five scholarships? If five guys go and test the waters, or three guys go and test the waters, do we not sign guys? I think that's going to be the tough part for us, whereas do we get some relief from the NCAA? Can we go over 85, which I know a lot of coaches would want to do, but now you're going to have some incongruity to where we have guys testing the waters and we can sign, now we have more than 85. We're

going to have 90 scholarship guys, some teams with 85. So that was thrown out as a possibility.

So I don't know what the answer can be, because I think that's going to be tough for me to say, oh, a guy's going to go test the waters, so I'm going to save the scholarship and not going to sign this linebacker that I like coming out of high school. But now the guy leaves, and I didn't sign the guy, and now I'm missing a player. That's going to be tough for me.

I think the NFL has done an admirable job, and I think we in college football can continue to help them and aid them in getting these evaluations back for our players to say where they're most likely to go. That, for us, as been pretty consistent and pretty good, good indicators for our guys, going first or second round or going beyond and past the first or second round, and helping those guys make decisions.

So I don't know that going to test the waters because they're not going to go scrimmage, because that's what they do in college basketball. They go to these camps and play basketball against upper-level players. These guys are not going to do that in football. They're not going to do a nine on seven or one-on-one against NFL caliber talent. So I don't know what that process can be beyond guys running 40s, et cetera, which, for me, only matters that much when it comes to draft status.

So outside of having film and an NFL evaluation of that film, and advice from coaches like me that have experience, I don't know what more we're going to do after February going into the spring. Because we can't take it all the way to the draft. I don't see -- it's not feasible to go all the way to April, and everybody's in spring football, the draft happens, two guys don't get drafted or don't like their draft status and want to come back to the team, I don't know how you do that.

Q. Talk about the adjustment to the kickoff rules. Is it the beginning of the end of the kickoff?

DAVID SHAW: Some would say that. I think there is a huge push from guys like me and a lot of coaches around America that don't want to see the end of the kickoff. I love kickoff and kickoff return. I really do. Just look at our history from Chris Owusu, who is the best kickoff returner in America at his time, to Ty Montgomery, to Christian McCaffrey, to Brendan -- Cameron Scarlett, excuse me, what he did this year and the guys that we've had.

So I think it's a big part of the game. It's a great part of the game. This fair catch rule, I think, is an attempt to see: How can we salvage this? I think the NFL has taken a different stance on how can they salvage it as well, and we'll have to see the results of both of those experiments to see what's best for the health of our

players and the health of our game.

Q. You tend to play a lot of freshmen anyway, does this new rule change anything you do and does it affect you differently than some of the other schools?

A. I think it affects us all the same. I'm really excited about this new rule and what it can do for young people. This is not just for my benefit and the coaches' benefit, this is for the benefit of the young people. Because what happens very often in three quick scenarios, number one, a young man comes in and he's really good and playing really well, and you're excited to play him. He gets out on the field, and he doesn't play as well. So now you don't burn that red-shirt. You can decide after a couple game he's not really ready, and you can pull him back and still reserve that year.

What happens to a lot of our guys is having a Harrison Phillips his freshman year, we decide to red-shirt him, and two guys get hurt. Now here you are in the middle of the season with a freshman that you have high aspirations for, and now you have to make that decision, can we throw him to the wolves? We throw him out there, and he plays pretty well for a couple games. Then those older guys get healthy and they come back.

So what we had to do with Harrison, we burned his red-shirt, we might as well keep working him in as opposed to let him play three or four games and pull him back out and reserve the year.

The other thing that I'm excited about and which help us a lot last year. We had a couple defensive back injuries last year, and Embolstin Odibo (phonetic), who red-shirted last year as a true freshman, by the end of the year, this kid was ready to play, but do you really burn a red-shirt year for the last four games of the year, where he really could have come in and helped us, would have been outstanding, but nobody makes that decision unless you absolutely have to. So now all three of those scenarios are going to work out for the benefit of these young people.

So we can go out and finish the season with the young guy, let him play the in bowl game if he's shown he's ready to play, and still be able to come back and have four full good years to play the sport.

So I think it's been a huge push by a lot of people in the sport, by the AFCA in particular. I think it's a great rule for all of our players.

Q. Did JJ Whiteside do anything with virtual reality while recovering from his injury?

DAVID SHAW: There's no question. You have a lot of experience, lot of playing time toward the end of last year. But still he needs to continue to gain experience.

That's one of those things that's just great for your brain to be in there, be immersed in that world, that virtual world, it is a real world, those are real people. And to feel that clock, the timing, and going through the reason progressions. I think it only continues to aid on gaining experience, working on the 10,000 hours to become an expert at something. I think it's been very, very beneficial.

Q. It seems like sports betting is on the horizon in the future. There has been a lot of discussion about college sports when it comes to that. Do you have any thoughts on that as far as your team or just college betting?

DAVID SHAW: I do. I have a lot of concerns about sports betting, and the element that -- I don't care about the actual wagering. Who cares. I don't care. Doesn't affect me one bit.

It's those unscrupulous individuals that want to influence the games, influence the people involved in the games. That's where you get worried. That's where you worry about the integrity of our game when it comes to those individuals that don't care about the student-athletes, don't care about the game. They only care about their monetary end and how they can improve their stance that's where you worry.

So I think we need to take a lot of steps precautionary-wise. I think when it starts to go from state to state to state, it's going to be very difficult to monitor. I think we need to educate our young people. I think we need to empower, whether it's the NCAA or have some injunction with -- starting with the State Department and what is legal, what is illegal, what is punishable, because one of the criticisms of the NCAA, which is founded, is they don't have subpoena power.

Now, if this is such a big issue, which we're all kind of nervous about and our government can step in and say, great, the people that cross the line, these are federal offenses, now we have some covers for those people that do something wrong.

Now it's not just the NCAA trying to find out, now we have officials coming in, and there is actual jail time on the table for those people that unduly influence and put some of our people in a difficult position. The punishments need to be real in order to keep the game clean and safe.

Q. How would you feel if the NCAA or the conference mandated injury reports?

DAVID SHAW: I would not be comfortable with that. I coached in the NFL for nine years, and there is a stark difference between working with professionals and working with college kids. I do not feel right giving out medical information of a 19-year-old. I think it's wrong in any way, shape or form. If there's something the young man and his family wants to release, that's up to him. It's his health.

But as far as institutionally talking about a young person's health, we have HIPAA laws that prohibit that. I think it's wrong, it's unnecessary, and I think it would be catering towards the gambling and the betting, which we can't, in my opinion, do that.

I think we need to be catering towards what's best for our young people and not worried about a betting line.

Q. Are you in favor of putting "out, probable or favorable" like the NFL?

DAVID SHAW: That's what I do anyway. So I know some coaches are not comfortable with that. You guys get the stone face from them. They don't tell you. If I know a guy's going to be out, I say he's out. If I know there is a chance he's going to play, there is a chance. If I know it's going to be a game-time decision, it's going to be a game-time decision.

I try not to play those games with the media. We don't get into specifics anyway. But I think it's up to each program to do that the way they feel it's necessary. And I don't believe it should change based on the betting laws changing. I don't think it's right.

Q. Does the early signing period put you at a disadvantage because of your admissions process? Did you like it?

DAVID SHAW: I am not in favor of anything we do in recruiting that pushes it earlier and makes it faster. I think we're putting undue pressure on teenagers. We're mounting pressure on these young people in an era where there is too much pressure on them as it is.

So I am not in favor of any of it now. It didn't affect us very much last year. We signed the majority of our team in December. There are going to be certain guys that we're going to have to see another test score on or see more grades or first semester grades, and some of those guys are going to have to make tough decisions. Do I wait for Stanford to see if I get admitted, because it's not a guarantee, or do I take the bird in the hand?

And we've had some guys choose one way and some guys choose the other. So it does put us in a difficult

position. For the most part, though, those guys that are pursuing us, not just those we're pursuing, it's worth it to them to say hold on to those other schools and see if they can get admitted. If it happens after the September timeframe, then it happens after.

We had a few guys that didn't cave to the pressure and said: I'm going to wait to see what my Stanford admissions is before I make my decision.

Q. Some teams are giving more than 250-300 offers, does it devalue the process giving out that many offers?

DAVID SHAW: 100%, because they're not real offers. If you've got 20 spots and you offer 300 kids, what have you done? I still don't know. I don't understand it. Because that tells me that 280 of those kids can't commit, so it's not a real offer. What have we actually done? So we've actually tried to offer guys that we are ready to commit, and we've been able to hold some guys off: We don't have a spot for you, I really like you, but we don't have a spot for you.

So now comes the difficult conversation. I have all these other offers. And I say, Are they real offers? Because those other schools have offered 299 other guys. Are you sure that's a real offer? Or is our way of doing it more respectful to you; that we're willing to offer you a sponsorship once we get a spot? And this is guys like Justin Reid, guys we really liked.

But I don't like to overoffer, because every offer from me is a real Stanford offer that a young man can commit to. So if I have 18 spots, I'm not going to offer 40 guys, you know? We might offer a little over 18, because there are a lot of guys that have to do some academic work that are maybe not quite there yet. But to offer five, ten, twenty times the number of scholarships that we have, it's asinine.

Q. Stanford and USC opened the Pac-12 season and closed it. Are they going to do it again this year?

DAVID SHAW: As a conference, we've had conversations about scheduling and different scheduling practices and different ways that we could do it going forward. Part of our issue is the combination of Stanford and USC playing Notre Dame, so where everybody else has a conference game, we have a non-conference game, so it's hard for us.

But we've talked about maybe loosening our mantra of having all of our non-conference games early in the year and maybe having more later-in-the-season non-conference games so there is more fluidity of our conference, going in and out of conference play.

So that's one thing that's been talked about among other things. So it has been a constant conversation. But for me, I think with Clay, also, we'd love to see that game happen later. We're also good to have it early too. Both teams, once again, you play early, and if you play well after that game, even if you lose, you have a chance, just like we did before, to work your way back into the Pac-12 Championship game.

Q. Is there one plays who has exceeded your expectations so far?

DAVID SHAW: That's a good question. I think we have a group of guys that I'm very, very excited about that have been kind of under the radar. The top of that list for me is Jovan Swann on the defensive line, who played on and off last year, and this off-season for him, he's grown so much. He's so explosive and so strong and excited about kind of being the guy in our front right now.

Joey Alfieri coming back healthy. Just excited for him to get back comfortable at his outside linebacker position and wreak havoc out there. It's great to have Alijah back, and we think he's going to play at a high level as well. We have a big group of guys. And brought JJ Arcega-Whiteside tonight -- or today. And JJ had a great second half of the year in particular last year, some big plays. We think he's only going to be even better this year.

Kaden Smith, tight end, really couple games last year was outstanding. We think he's going to have another breakout year as well, as well as K.J. Costello.

So I think we have a lot of guys that have a chance to have outstanding years, are poised to have outstanding years. But we have a lot of room to grow also. We're still looking for a starter at left guard. We still have some health issues in our fullback position, and other guys on the defensive line. So we have some other spot that's we're still looking for guys. We have some guys that are poised for big years.

Q. Bryce Love will often be contained for a while and then bust out a long run. How do you explain his persistence?

DAVID SHAW: I wish I could explain it. I have no idea. You never know when those plays are going to happen. The funny thing with him is you get to the point you know it's going to happen at some point, so we don't worry about the three- and four-yard games with him. At some point he's going to break one.

What is unique about Bryce is a lot of those big runs, they're not untouched runs. They're runs where he has to break a tackle, make a guy miss, and then his acceleration, I don't know that I've seen live, on the field, an acceleration like that.

Some of you remember "Rocket" Ismail from Notre Dame. I have not seen a guy in three or four steps get to full speed like Bryce since "The Rocket."

Q. JJ talked about his internship with Condoleezza Rice. Obviously a special opportunity for him. But mixing politics, is there a way to benefit the whole structure?

DAVID SHAW: Well, I think we have a really nice progression. A lot of different areas right now, but particularly in politics with Cory Booker. We've had a lot of guys meet with Cory Booker, and he's been on campus a much. Condi has done a phenomenal job. JJ's majoring in international relations, so that is a very fascinating world for him. We have a few guys on our team right now that are going down that road right now, public policy, et cetera.

I think for us, to have the caliber of human beings that we have, I would love for a lot of our guys to get into politics, because I think they could be great ambassadors for our country.

Q. How do you expect Trent to contribute this year?

DAVID SHAW: I think Trent has been a phenomenal team player. I think his numbers are going to rise this year. I think the consistency at quarterback is going to help him. I think our desire to get quarterbacks over 60% completion is going to help him as well. He's one of those -- and you hate to say that possession receiver is like a bad word, but he's a phenomenal route runner, he's got great hands. He can make tough catches. He's so dependable in those tight situations and option routes and working outside.

I think he and K.J. this summer have really developed even more of a synchronicity, if that is even a word, that they feel very comfortable with each other. I think he's going to have a breakout year as well.