

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

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Chip Kelly UCLA Bruins



CHIP KELLY: Our running back Josh Kelley, who's over there in the corner, he's the quiet kid that doesn't -- Josh, I'm talking about you, buddy. And then over here, we've got one of the real true leaders of our defense, Krys Barnes, who had an outstanding season for us last year, and we're really expecting big things out of him. With that, we'll open it up to questions and fire away.

Q. Does last year's record change your approach to the seasons?

CHIP KELLY: No, we're not dictated by the record. We have a plan going in, and we'll always follow that plan. Everything has been planned out and detailed for the entire season, and we've got to play the games and see how we stack up against the teams that we're going to play. But the record doesn't dictate changing any plans that we have for ourselves.

Q. What is your philosophy on recruiting high school freshmen and younger?

CHIP KELLY: I mean, I don't know what's healthy, not healthy. I think when I was a freshman I was worried about what I was wearing to school the next day, let alone was I offered a scholarship by a school that really didn't mean I was offered.

I think 10 years ago when you got a letter of interest from a school, the new norm now is to just offer them a scholarship. Somebody says he can play, we'll throw an offer.

I think for us, when we offer somebody -- we're a difficult school to get into, so it's not fair for a student-athlete to offer him a scholarship and then tell him a year later he can't get in. So we've wasted a year of his time, coming over unofficially, spending time with our school; we've wasted a year of our time with someone we really can't recruit.

There's a lot more that goes into it. I think David at Stanford has a little bit of the same approach. When you have some academic standards at your university, I think when you're offering people, you'd better make sure those guys kids that you're spending time with are kids that are actually going to be able to get into your school.

I don't think it's a unique approach, but I think it's -- we don't want to waste time. We don't want to waste student-athletes' time, nor do we want to waste our own time. We need to find out a lot about the student-athletes from a background standpoint because that's really the reason that they're going to get admitted to the university.

Q. Talk about the offensive linemen recruiting misses?

CHIP KELLY: No, I think there's a lot of kids out there, and some kids go early, some kids go late. There's not a set way to doing it. We do our due diligence, and Justin has done a great job, really excited about the freshmen we have coming in now, and obviously can't comment on kids that are being recruited, whether they've committed to us or have committed at other places.

Q. What is your take on the transfer portal? You've had kids come in and kids leave via the transfer portal.

CHIP KELLY: I think the transfer portal is a good thing. If kids go somewhere and they're not happy there, then they should be allowed to go where they're going to be happy. I mean, coaches move. I don't know why players can't move. I've never had a problem with the transfer portal. And I don't understand that argument. Sometimes it's not the same thing. A kid may have gotten recruited by one coach and a new staff comes in. Well, why does that kid have to stay, know what I mean? I think the transfer portal is good, and I think the players -- they just need to know all the facts. Just because you go on the transfer portal doesn't mean another school is going to offer you a scholarship, either. I think they need to do their homework on their end so they're not caught left out in the woods. But I don't have an issue with the transfer rule.

Q. How much did that win last year against USC kind of set the tone for the spring this year?

CHIP KELLY: Did Ben ask you to ask that question? It's just a joke because Ben asks about momentum all the time. Again, I think each week is a season, so I think how you prepare on a weekly basis helps you win on a weekly basis. You really don't know -- we went out and played Stanford after that and lost. You could argue that the momentum didn't even follow into the next week. Part of it is I think our players understand,

and you can look back at that game and learn from it, that we had a really good week of preparation and we played really well on that Saturday. You can tie that correlation together and there's evidence for the players to kind of look back on it, what was your preparation like that game week, and then how did we perform that game week, and I think you can build from that.

But to think our last six games we had over 400 yards of offense and all these other things, you still have to go out and do the work. And that's what I think this group we have right now really understands that. They've worked extremely hard over the summer, and we're excited to get back on the field with them next Wednesday and really start in earnest to play a really good Cincinnati team, and that's kind of what we'll talk about.

But you learn from the past, and you can study it a little bit. But I think if you spend too much time in the past, you become irrelevant in the future. We're not spending too much time on that. We're on to the 2019 season.

Q. I know you say history means nothing --

CHIP KELLY: Again, I attribute that to Ben.

Q. Did you sense the second half of the season that they turned it around --

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I think our players, the kids we had at the end of the year, we had a lot of injuries, but the kids at the end of the year understood what it took to win. It takes focus every single day because every week you're going to have to play a real formidable opponent, so you've got to be able to crank it up each week. There's not an off week, you know what I mean, and when you look at our schedule, playing at Cincinnati who's 11-2 and a really good San Diego State team and then playing Oklahoma and then getting into league play, there's not an easy game. There's not a, hey, let's -- this game is going to help us prepare for anything else.

I think what we've learned and what we need to grow upon is that how you prepare on a weekly basis affects how you play on that Saturday. And if you had a good week the week before, you learn from it; but you can't kick your feet up and say, hey, we don't really have to prepare as hard this week because we won last week and momentum is going to take care of us. That's just not going to happen.

Q. Both Krys and Josh mentioned your saying of habits reflect the mission. You said that also when you were in the NFL, some of your teams. What does that mean to you as a coach?

CHIP KELLY: I just think everybody is on a mission, no matter what it is, and everybody's mission is different. But if you want to be successful, then your habits have to reflect your mission.

There's a lot of people that say, you know, New Year's Day I'm going to get in shape and I'm going to go work and do other things, and it lasts for three days, and then they're buying chips and soda at the store three days later. Their habits don't reflect their mission. You all figure out what your mission is and then your habits need to reflect that. So that's all we're just trying to emphasize, your habits need to reflect that. That's all we're trying to emphasize, making good choices. And when you have an opportunity to be presented, like we all are with decisions during the course of the day, do your habits reflect what your mission is.

Q. Is the team doing better with that?

CHIP KELLY: I think so. I think the group we have right now, I really like them. I like the way they work. I like their mindset. I like how they approach it on a daily basis, and I think that's gotten across to these guys, and they understand that.

Q. You're a proponent of those early morning practices. Did that early kickoff --

CHIP KELLY: I'd kick off at 6:00 a.m. When you wake up -- if you're a college football player or coach, you want to wake up and you want to play football. The hardest thing with Saturdays is when you wake up and then you've got to wait until 7:00 at night.

But we're also big on we don't control our schedule and when we kick off. So tell us where it is and when we're kicking off, and we'll be there. If they want us to play at 9:00, we'll play at 9:00; if they want us to play at 7:00 at night, we'll play at 7:00 at night. Want us to play at 6:00 in the morning, we'll play at 6:00 in the morning. That part, that's -- we always talk about control the controllables, and we don't have the control over kickoffs. So they tell us when to play, we'll play.

But we practice in the morning, so we're morning people. We'd love to do things in the morning. I don't know if our fans would, but again, I don't have a vote, so I don't care. Just tell us when we're kicking.

Q. Talk a little bit about the virtual reality facility tool that you're having installed and what does that offer you?

CHIP KELLY: I just think it offers the quarterbacks a little bit more training. It hasn't been put in yet, so we're waiting to see the final product before we can get moving on that, but it's just another way to train your quarterbacks, an ability to get them reps.

A lot of schools have used different versions. We have kind of a newer version. I'll be able to give you a little bit more background after we get it up and running.

Q. Does it work for other positions, too?

CHIP KELLY: I think that's the plan, but right now we haven't -- it's not finalized. So we haven't been able to actually use it.

Q. How is Dorian Thompson-Robinson doing this spring?

CHIP KELLY: He's been good. Again, we haven't been with him since last spring, so our strength coaches have had great reports with him, and he's got -- the one thing about Dorian I've always loved is he's got an unbelievable work ethic. He's always thirsty for something else and wanting to get better, and he's been doing it since we ended on April 20th, was our last practice with him.

So now we kind of turn him over to the strength coaches. And in terms of running and all those other things, he's done a really good job, and we're excited as a staff to get back with Dorian and all of our next players next Wednesday.

Q. Some of the guys talked about you bringing in someone to teach them how to play chess.

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, there's a guy that's come over to our complex that talks to them. It's just an optional thing for our players. Some guys have gravitated to it; other guys have not. So it's just an opportunity to kind of expand how they think and what they do. And it's a fun thing to do. Probably better than playing video games. Good lifelong skill to learn.

Q. Do you think that kind of correlates, like, you have to think ahead a few --

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, but any game where you have to think I think is going to help stimulate you cognitively. And if that helps stimulate you cognitively, then I think it's beneficial to you.

Q. Why do you think so many coaches are more open to starting true freshmen at starting positions?

CHIP KELLY: Because they have to. I think it's a necessity in a lot of situations. Usually necessity is the mother of all invention, so I think a lot of times when you don't -- this past year, Dorian was our No. 2 quarterback and went down in the second quarter. So who started week 2 was the guy who finished week 1. But I think it would be great -- back in the old days everybody got redshirted. Nobody played as a freshman. But also kids are a lot more talented, I think, and they've been exposed to more things at the high school level because the level of high school coaching

and play at the quarterback spot earlier in their careers -- it used to be in the NFL that rookie quarterbacks didn't play in the NFL, but they're all playing in the NFL. I think it's all kind of -- the whole system has sped itself up.

But I think the reason why most of them can is I think that coaching at the high school level is really, really good, and it's not a foreign language when they get to college. They've done a lot of things that are necessary to be a quarterback at the college level.

Q. Just to compare that, when you were first getting started in college as a recruiter, how often would you come across a high school senior that you felt could make that jump?

CHIP KELLY: I mean, we actually redshirted Marcus at Oregon. He was our No. 2 quarterback for the entire season. So if we had an injury, we would have played him, but we didn't. We were fortunate enough that Darren played great for us so we didn't have to play Marcus. But I think every freshman wants to play when they're a freshman, and then when they get to a senior, they all wish they were redshirted and had another year.

I think the new redshirt rule is actually beneficial because about 20 of our kids played last year in game experiences but played four games or less, so we had the opportunity to redshirt them, and they get a chance to kind of do it over again. So I think the NCAA was really smart in that.

We were a team that really took advantage of that, especially late in the year when we had so many injuries and where normally you wouldn't have played those kids in games like that because you didn't want to waste a year of eligibility on them, but we had a kid played meaningful snaps in the SC game and the Stanford game, and that was beneficial to these kids because they're still going to be freshmen when we start next week.

I think that rule has really benefitted guys, and you almost can do it at the beginning of the year and see what they can do. And if it's good, maybe you shut them down after four and say they're not ready. Or you continue like he is ready, but it gives you an opportunity to not play.

It used to be if they play one snap, that counts as an entire season. I think there was more that went into the decision before. I don't think now, knowing that you have a little leeway and say we can throw a kid out there and see what he can do, and if it's good, I will continue; if we don't think he's ready, then maybe we can pull it back. I think the approach with the new rule has kind of changed things to be honest with you.

Q. Josh Kelly said that you said he had more to give, which was his reason for coming back.

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, that wouldn't what -- there wasn't more to give, I think it was more to learn and to grow. The National Football League is a grown man's league, and when you get one opportunity when you get there, and are you ready to go. And Josh didn't start for us until really our fourth game into the season. I think there's a lot more experiences that he needs as a player, and that's going to benefit him. And I think it's going to make him a more viable candidate going into the league this year.

I just shared that with him. So it's not more to give, and it's nothing about giving. Like Josh has given everything he's had to the university. Our job is to help prepare him for an opportunity after this, and I think that this extra year will help benefit him.

Two years ago he was at UC Davis, so he had less than three quarters of a season playing collegiate football at a Power Five level, and that's a big jump coming from Davis, and then the jump from Power Five school to the NFL is a huge jump. And if you're not ready for it, you've got about 30 days to prove yourself. If not, you get cut, and there's that one day in the beginning of September when rosters go from 90 to 53 and 37 guys on 32 teams get cut and their dreams are over.

You only get that opportunity really once, maybe twice, but you'd better make sure that when you get that opportunity, you're prepared. So I think under another year with DeShaun, who's got great experience and had an unbelievable career at the National Football League, another year with DeShaun is going to be really beneficial to Josh. So that's kind of what our conversation was about.

Q. How can he become a more complete running back?

CHIP KELLY: He can do a lot of things, 3rd down, pass pro, catching balls out of the backfield, being a viable weapon in the passing game. There's a lot more nuances to playing running back than just how many yards did you gain. Can you actually stay on the field on 3rd down? Can you pick up appropriately in pass protection, not only in technique and skill but recognition?

And those are all things where a lot of times to give Josh a blow last year we had him out on 3rd down. So he doesn't have -- even though he played I don't know how many snaps during the season, there weren't a ton of 3rd down reps for him, but that's something we can expand to put on his plate this year a little bit more. And that will expose him, because the game at the NFL

is -- I think it was the first time this year that they threw the ball more than they ran the ball in the National Football League. So it's a pass protection, running back route running league right now, and you better be good if you plan on playing beyond college.

Q. What's an example of something that you clearly see different in year two as opposed to trying to establish in year one?

CHIP KELLY: Just familiarity, like our players know how we practice, how we train, how we meet, how we take notes, how we communicate as a group, the whys and wherefores of what we're doing.

And then it's incumbent on the guys that have been here last year to kind of help the young guys assimilate to that, where a year ago everything was a first. Everything was the first meeting that we had, the first practice that we had, the first away game that we had, the first road trip that we had.

So all of those things that sometimes you take for granted that kids don't know, like what is the system on game day, what time are we up and when are we eating and all those things have already been established, our routine has been established. So now it's -- now that they know where they're supposed to be and when they're supposed to be there, let's get into the hows and the whys of what we're trying to get accomplished.

I think the familiarity is the big thing that will really benefit us going into year two.

Q. What's your thoughts about (indiscernible) more transparency?

CHIP KELLY: I think that's a good thing. And I didn't feel like they weren't transparent -- maybe with the public, but, I mean, I think all leagues are moving to that, the NBA talks about what calls were made in the last two minutes, and there's other people kind of moving towards that.

Q. In the NFL where they have the weekly (indiscernible).

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I think that's a more fan-oriented thing. As the coaches, we've moved on to the next game. We get feedback immediately on Monday in the NFL and then we move on. If it's beneficial to the fans and they're concerned -- the one thing that's going to happen, though, they're never going to take a call back. You can talk to the Saints about that. They're not taking a call back. I don't know how that makes anybody feel better, to be honest with you. To me it pours a little more salt in the wounds with, yeah, we missed that call. All right. We still lost the game, but, so...

Q. Was the feedback with the league office good last year?

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, from a coaching staff, we've never had an issue. Dave Coleman has been fantastic. Whenever we've called and asked him a question, he's always given us -- and all we all want to is just how are you guys going to call this. That's it. You don't have to agree with the rule or disagree with the rule. It doesn't matter. Some people think they should be able to drive 75 miles an hour. But if there's a policeman on the road with a gun out like that, you're going to take your foot off the gas, right?

So you can disagree or agree with it all you want. All you want to know is how are they going to officiate it. Are they going to allow you to go 68? Then you can go 68. Or are they going to hard line it at 65? That's all you want as a coach.

And Dave has always been very good with the communication with us. And as a staff, we always just ask what's their interpretation of this. This call was made. Can you tell me why it was made? All right. Let's move on.

Q. How big a deal is establishing the run and stopping the run in your program?

CHIP KELLY: I think there are some things in football that kind of go -- it depends on who you are, know what I mean? It also depends on the week, what's the weather like. So how important is establishing the run when it's a torrential downpour. I think it's probably really important because we're not going to be able to throw the ball as much as we want to throw the ball that week.

So I think I've been in games where we've run it 50 times one week and thrown it 50 times the next week. So there can be another game where you say, hey, our plan right now is establish the run and stop the run, and then all of a sudden you're down 21 in the first quarter. Well, you're going to have to throw the ball more to catch up in that game. Even though your plan going in is we're going to establish the run, but we couldn't establish the run because we had a punt return for a touchdown, we had a fumble that was returned for a touchdown, and now we're in a really big hole.

I think you go into a game plan of how you want to attack a defense, but you also have to understand the down and distances and the score at the time of it. There's not, hey, we're going to do this and we're going to do that, because the other team has a plan, too. You've got to kind of be able to react to that.

Q. In general, is the emphasis on that different in

college versus the NFL?

CHIP KELLY: No. I know in the NFL for the first time this year they threw the ball more than they ran the ball, and that's the first time. But in college it's all over the map. Like if you're at Washington State with Mike, they're going to throw the ball more than they're going to run the ball. That's just what they do. That's his mindset and his tenet of what he does, and it's been very, very successful for him.

Q. In the NFL, as I'm sure you know, there's sort of been this deemphasis of the running back position, that guys have a hard time getting a second contract, maybe they're not drafted as high as they were in the past, whereas in college -- you were just talking about Joshua Kelley. He's kind of a centerpiece of your offense. That's the case at a lot of schools. Why do you think that difference exists between the college game and the NFL game?

CHIP KELLY: The difference exists in the NFL is there's a set amount of money you're allowed to spend, so you have to allot how are you going to spend it. So you're going to give X amount of chunk -- hypothetically to the quarterback position; then who's the quarterback throw it to, who protects the quarterback, who rushes the quarterback and who defends the receivers. So now when you get through there, you still haven't talked about your running back yet.

So it's the same thing, why does the left tackle make more than the left guard, because that's just the nature of the game. That doesn't mean the left guard isn't as good as the left tackle, but when you only have X amount of money to cut up between 53 guys, how are you going to cut that money up, you know, when it's -- it's a fascinating study, but it's really -- it's a pay-for-play league, and it depends on what position you are to how much they have to pay you.

It doesn't mean that one position is more important than another position, because you do have to be able to have a threat of the run and all these other things, but you have to figure out in the NFL what you can get away with not paying as much as some other spots. It doesn't mean that one position is deemphasized, it's just you only have X amount of money.

In baseball, where you can go over the cap, in football, if you could go over the cap, then you'd see running backs maybe get featured a little bit more and paid a little bit more.

Q. I'm curious on your national perception of the Pac-12.

CHIP KELLY: I think we have to think about what our job is on a daily basis and not be concerned with the

other aspects of it. And if we do a good job daily and we end up winning games, then we deserve to be talked about. But if we don't end up winning games, then we don't deserve to be talked about.

I think it's a meritocracy from that standpoint. I don't think there's a bias one way or the other. They talk about teams that win, and if you win, then you'll be talked about. You should focus and worry about winning as opposed to what people are talking about.

Q. (No microphone) under the new redshirt rule, who are a couple that you saw?

CHIP KELLY: I think there's a lot of them. Alec Anderson is an offensive lineman for us. Jon Gaines is an offensive lineman that played like that. Kyle Philips is a wide receiver for us that we got an opportunity to play. Greg Dulcich is another receiver/tight end for us that got an opportunity to get in games and play some a little bit. David Priebe is a tight end that got in and played some games. Elisha Guidry in the secondary, Rayshad Williams in the secondary. We got a chance to kind of get those guys in and get their feet wet a little bit.

There's a lot kind of over through the course of what we got an opportunity -- it was more wideout, some O-line guys and some DB's. Some of the other guys, the D-line had to play. There was a couple O-linemen. Chris Murray had to play and deserved to play because of where he sat on our lineup. But there's about 10 or 15 of those guys that got great experience last year, and then hopefully they can build upon that.

Q. Talk about the versatility of Martell Irby?

CHIP KELLY: Martell? Yeah, I think he's a really versatile player. I think he's -- again, he feels a lot more comfortable in what we're doing because of our depth at running back when we lose Bolu and Soso. You know, Irby's had to play the entire year for us. So we didn't get the opportunity to redshirt him.

But I think he's kind of expanded his game a little bit, understanding the difference between 1st down and 3rd down, pass protections. A lot of things that Josh is working on, kind of Martell was in the same spot just because it was his first year in the system, too.

We hope he continues to grow because I think he could have a real impact. Because we're going to have to have some other guys besides Josh. This isn't going to be a one-man show at the running back spot next year.

Q. What did you see from Darnay Holmes during spring?

CHIP KELLY: Really good leadership I think on our team. Darnay is kind of a go-to leader because

Darnay walks the walk before he talks the talk. And his work ethic and mindset I think is special, and there's a maturity to Darnay that I think rubs off on a lot of the younger guys. They kind of gravitate to him. I think he enjoys that mentoring role and really takes it to heart.

But the first and foremost with Darnay is he walks the walk first. There's nothing that he tells another player to do that he hasn't done himself. And I don't know if we have a more dedicated guy to the game of football and to just being a good person, a good student, a worker, everything. Darnay kind of epitomizes that. He's done a really good job in the classroom. He's going to graduate in three years. He's done it in every walk. It's not just he's into one thing, not the other. He's done it in everything. He has the ability when he -- and he talks, and he's done it. And I think the players really respect him for that.

Q. Have you had a chance to meet Mick Cronin?

CHIP KELLY: I've met Mick, yeah. I know his reputation. I know guys that have coached with him, and I think he's outstanding, and I think he's going to do a really, really good job. I'm excited to see his teams play. They're going to be a really tough defensive-minded team. And that's -- every team he's coached has been like that, so I think it's going to be exciting to go watch them play.