

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

Tuesday, July 27, 2021  
Hollywood, California, USA

## Arizona Wildcats

### Jedd Fisch

#### Press Conference

JEDD FISCH: Good afternoon, everybody. Guess I'm second to last, which is what you guys normally rank me anyway, so it's a good start to Pac-12 Media Day (laughter).

Excited to be here. Super excited to be a part of this day today, representing the University of Arizona. Thrilled on where our program's going. Thrilled on where it's gone the last seven months. Really excited about the team that we have here.

I'd say we have two outstanding leaders that we brought with us, Anthony Pandy, Stanley Berryhill, two fifth-year players that have been a part of a lot of coaching changes, have been a part of a lot of different staffs. Both of them had opportunities to go elsewhere at the end of this year and both of them decided to stay. They've become incredible leaders for our program. Super excited about that.

It's personal for me, it's personal for my family to be a part of this university and be a part of our program. My family has embraced Tucson, my wife and my three girls absolutely love it. We're excited to make it home for a very long time.

We've worked extremely hard over the course of the last seven months to not just change the culture but create our own culture. We talk about from the very beginning an expectation of really taking a mindset of becoming a pro. When we say 'becoming a pro' we talk to our players about being purposeful, being resilient and original in everything they do. We talk to our team about the values that we have in our program and how important it is that we don't need to live in a world of rules as long as we live in a world of values.

Our program and our team has completely embraced it. Our guys have done an unbelievable job academically since we've arrived. It's the highest GPA they've ever had. They've done an unbelievable job when it comes to



community service, over 700 hours of community service. They've taken care of their bodies. They understand the importance of being available this fall.

We have 93% of our team vaccinated. We have eight players out of the 118 on the roster that currently are not. We believe it's a competitive advantage to get vaccinated, to live freely, let's say, in terms of their health and their wellness. We want our players to take care of themselves in every way, shape or form.

We're excited about some of the things that we've done with our team in regards to We Educate Wednesday, we started a program with our team where they have been able to learn from and hear from some of the very best in all professions, all walks of life.

We've had the 17th surgeon general of the United States speak to our team last Wednesday. We've had Sean McVay speak to our team. Jim Caldwell spoke to our team, we've had Barry Scheck from the Innocence Project speak to our team. We've had guys like Mike Lombardi and Howie Roseman, NFL general managers. In turn we've also had professors from our university in everything from indigenous law to African American studies to Title IX.

We recognize the landscape of college football. We recognize the landscape of building a program. We are excited to do it. We've embraced it. We believe in it. We believe Tucson is a special place. We have brought in a lot of transfers that have been at other universities from around the country that have come to join our program. We've brought a lot of people back to the state of Arizona. We believe it is our job to recruit Arizona better than it's ever been recruited.

I 100% believe that if you're going to choose a state university, choose the one in your own state first and foremost. If we can get guys to come to the University of Arizona from the state of Arizona, we are going to do very, very well.

We also believe in our neighboring states and how important recruiting is there. We are going to spend every waking moment doing the best job we possibly can to



recruit the very, very best to come to the University of Arizona.

We hired a great staff. We hired Don Brown, who not even arguably, statistically is the best defensive coordinator in college football over the last eight years. We were able to get him from the University of Michigan. He had the number one ranked defense at Boston College in 2015, the number one ranked defense at Michigan in 2016, and a top five defensive for four out of the last five years.

Offensively we hired Brennan Carroll, for all of you in L.A. you must be familiar with the name. It's Pete Carroll's son. Brennan was at USC. Brennan was with me at the University of Miami. Brennan was at the Seattle Seahawks the last six or seven years, to be our offensive coordinator.

We hired Jimmie Dougherty who was most recently at UCLA the last four years, to join us and become our passing game coordinator.

We believe our staff is as good as it gets. We believe in our players, we believe in our program. I am extremely grateful to our administration for giving me this opportunity to be here today.

So I will open it up to any and all questions that you might have.

**Q. All I see is joy. I've been covering this team for a while now. I love the joy that you've brought to the program. Seeing Ricky Hunley and Chuck Cecil full of joy as well, wanting this more than anything, knowing you also wanted a job like this has meant to a lot of fans. What have you learned from those two coaches about the University of Arizona that's helped you?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, well, thank you. Joy actually, I want to give some credit there to Steve Kerr, another Arizona Wildcat. Anybody that's done any research and read or listened to any podcasts that Steve has done, one of the four values of the Golden State Warriors is joy. I've done a lot of research in my past. I always felt like if I ever had a chance to build my own program, joy was going to surround it.

Bringing in Ricky Hunley and Chuck Cecil and Tedy Bruschi gave me an opportunity to bring in three Hall of Famers. We only have four. So the fact we have three college football Hall of Famers on our staff in different capacity gives me a great chance to be successful.

When it comes to Tedy, he has really done a great job for me from the outside, being an adviser for me, being a resource and running our leadership council.

Ricky and Chuck, they exude passion and joy. What we get from them is every day you have a coach of the safeties and a coach of the defensive line that has done that, been there, been to the NFL, coached in the NFL, played in the NFL, drafted in the NFL, and were some of the best players that ever played at the University of Arizona. But they love it. They love it. We love having them around. Our players benefit from it.

**Q. The uniforms, there's been a lot of fans asking to bring the uniforms back to what it used to be. Did I get that inkling that we're going to get some new uniforms this season?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I think I'm going to tell you the same thing I tell the recruits: Don't worry about the uniforms. We got to play well. Hopefully these uniforms will look good on them. I think everybody will be happy with the way they look.

But I do believe in tradition. I do believe in basics. I believe in being able to wear the same helmet for every game.

**Q. Speaking about traditions, what game day traditions are you going to bring back? Are you going to come up with new ones?**

JEDD FISCH: It's like a layup right there (laughter).

In terms of game day, we are going to try to change as many much as we can and embrace what's worked. For us, we're absolutely going to do the catwalk. We're excited about that. I've always had dreams of being a college head coach one day and getting off that bus with my wife and leading a team. We're going to do that.

We're going to incorporate some new songs. We're going to incorporate a little bit more of a party atmosphere. I really believe it should be the best four-hour party. That's what college football is. If you miss out on that, you're missing out -- we all missed out on it in 2020. We need to find a way to get a party atmosphere back. We're going to bring a deejay right in the heart of the ZonaZoo. We're going to make it as much fun as humanly possible.

In the third quarter, we're going to sing some songs, hopefully win some ballgames.

**Q. Anthony Pandy said you were kind of like Thanos when you came here, you snapped your finger and everything changed. First of all, do you know who Thanos is?**

JEDD FISCH: I Googled it (laughter). Yes, I know who Thanos is.

**Q. How did you go about changing the vibe, atmosphere, mindset that existed within the program when you got there?**

JEDD FISCH: I mean, I was the authentic me. I didn't know what existed truthfully. I didn't really know exactly what it was like. I didn't come from the program. I didn't get elevated up.

For me, it was to come in and be me, hire the guys that I believed in, and make it our program. Where I am the most grateful is we had an athletic director and a president that allowed me to do that. That's how we were able to make the significant changes we made in such a short period of time.

**Q. You've been active on social media. Why did you feel like that was important to put yourself out there like that, promote the program via that channel?**

JEDD FISCH: Well, it's 2021. To me that's the best way to communicate with not just our own students but potential students, prospective student-athletes, our fan base, our alumni. Really everybody and anybody that wanted to listen.

I felt like very simply put we have an incredible situation. We have an unbelievable university. We have a university that is very prideful, that wants to win, that hasn't won recently. I believe that we need everybody onboard.

I've heard the old saying, If you win, they will come. I always tell these guys, If you come, we'll win.

Let's find a way to get everybody in there. We feel social media is an opportunity to do that.

**Q. When you say these guys, you mean recruits?**

JEDD FISCH: I mean everybody, fans, alumni, media. You guys can all come, too, cheer if you want.

**Q. That's not allowed.**

JEDD FISCH: I know (laughter).

But the fans, the prospective student-athletes, the families and the alum.

**Q. What is your assessment of how recruiting has gone so far?**

JEDD FISCH: We can't really speak about the current class. But what I can say is that we brought in I believe it's up to 14 transfers that have come from other Division I programs, a lot of them from Power 5 programs, that I believe that's recruiting. When they put themselves in the portal and we had to compete to get them, that's a huge part of it.

We signed two kids in high school. When we arrived, we assigned Jason Taylor's son Isaiah Taylor, who is a Hall of Famer, I always believe in pedigree, from St. Thomas Aquinas. I think he's fantastic. And Isaiah Simpson. Also prior to our arrival we had 14 other guys that signed. They have all done an unbelievable job. All 30 of our new players have 100% embraced everything we've asked of them.

**Q. Is everyone onboard? Did everyone make it academically or is anyone from the class not...**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, very proud to say everyone will be here. We'll have 118 players walk in on August 5th, all 118 will be participating in camp.

**Q. Do you know how many of the 118 are on scholarship?**

JEDD FISCH: I believe currently we're at 81 or 79. Then we'll hopefully be able to award some scholarships to some guys, just like we'll award the No. 1 to the right guy.

**Q. What do you mean the No. 1?**

JEDD FISCH: Jersey No. 1 is hanging in the rafters right now in the indoor facility. We had nine guys that requested it. It's a meritocracy. They're going to be able to compete to get that number one jersey. Whoever does the best academically, socially, with community service, on the practice field, in the weight room, will be able to wear that jersey for the season.

**Q. Do you make a distinction between who the scholarship players are and who the walk-on players are?**

JEDD FISCH: No. As a matter of fact I'm not sure I can even name them all. Whoever is the best, really that's my distinction, if you're good or you're not. We're trying to get as many good ones as we can, whether that be a walk-on or not.

I do know we had a couple people we've been very fortunate to bring in as a preferred walk-on that have been phenomenal players. Extremely excited about some of those guys. But we have some really good young

freshmen. They better be ready to compete.

**Q. Do you think the quality of the preferred walk-ons is another indication, there's an example of recruiting, successful recruiting, that they want to be here?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, absolutely. I believe the preferred walk-on program and the idea of it is really just another way to build your roster up. I think it's super cool that we have that opportunity.

We get some guys that choose to pay when they could get it for free somewhere else. We really appreciate that. We recognize that. We give them those opportunities.

**Q. You have a boatload of experience in the NFL as an offensive assistant, particularly you worked under one of the best coaches in the NFL, Bill Belichick. Can you go over anything you learned from him and how you want to implement it in the college game?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I've been extremely fortunate in the NFL, in college, to have worked for some of the best coaches. Certainly in the NFL, most recently Coach Belichick, Coach McVay, Coach Carroll. All three of them have not only influenced me but helped me and will help our football team. Coach Carroll and Coach McVay had already talked to our guys.

With Coach Belichick, I talk to him extremely often. I will say the number one thing that I brought to our program is mental and physical toughness, the idea of doing what's best for the team if it's not what is best for you is being mentally tough. Our team knows that. We talk about that. We try to give our team the opportunity to be a smart, physical and tough football team. I certainly credit Coach Belichick for that message.

**Q. The program is coming off three losing seasons. How do you establish a winning culture with a program that has been down over the years?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, well, they have been down the last couple years. But if you look back at last season, I mean, a minute and 27 seconds away from beating USC. They have a lead, up 30-27. First game of the year, who knows what would have happened differently. They're up 21 points the year before against Arizona State. Who knows what would have happened differently if they wound up winning that game and not losing it.

I try not to spend too much time dwelling on that. I've been around a lot of winning programs. I've been very fortunate to say that. I was in the Pac-12 in 2017. I had a chance to be the interim head coach at UCLA for two games. Take a

team to a bowl game. Then when I didn't get the job, I went to the Rams, who went to the Super Bowl. You see what that's like. You see what it feels like to be around winners and winning. It was a pretty phenomenal experience.

I went back and had another good year, then went to New England to be around arguably the best coach that's ever done it.

We talk about the winning culture, and we don't talk about what happened in the past.

**Q. A few guys who had surgeries, their readiness. Jamarye Joiner was one. He had something done with his foot. Do you believe he's going to be ready at the start of camp?**

JEDD FISCH: I don't think he'll be ready for the start of camp.

**Q. What is the timetable?**

JEDD FISCH: I don't know. He's moving well. He'll be ready.

**Q. Jaden Mitchell?**

JEDD FISCH: Yup.

**Q. He'll be ready?**

JEDD FISCH: Yup.

**Q. Christian Young.**

JEDD FISCH: Ready.

**Q. What has the reception been generally speaking when you're talking to recruits, parents, et cetera, offering them the opportunity to come and play for Arizona?**

JEDD FISCH: It's been fantastic. We work hard at it. It matters to us. It matters to my wife. It matters to our other coaches' wives. Wives are a huge part of it, connecting with the moms and the dads.

We're very, very actively involved. I believe that I feel like I'm on more text chains with moms than I am with the kids sometimes. But the truth be told, it's a situation where we're recruiting very hard and we're trying very hard to turn this thing around. We have an unbelievable amount of enthusiasm toward our program and energy towards our program. I believe if we do things the right way, things will

work out really well for the Arizona Wildcats.

**Q. Have any of the coaches you've brought on surprised you at all with their recruiting prowess?**

JEDD FISCH: We have some really, really good recruiters. Jordan Paopao, very well-known in the Pac-12 is a fantastic recruiter. Jimmy has always been a great recruiter. We have a lot of great recruiters on our staff. Obviously those guys stand out. Kevin Cummings does a great job in this area.

But we have a great staff. We have a great bunch of coaches. They're all great recruiters really. That's part of it. If you're not a great recruiter, you can't do 50% of your job. If you can't do 50% of your job, you really can't do your job. Those guys are all recruiting as hard as possible to be great at it.

**Q. One of your top aides Matt Doherty said, Arizona needs to outwork or out-hustle whatever the national perception is. Do you agree with that stance?**

JEDD FISCH: I believe that we need to work as hard as we possibly can. I was once on a team that was told we're going to do it better than everybody else. I said, How do you know how good everyone else is doing it? We're not going to take that approach.

We're going to say we're going to do it as good as we can, work as hard as we possibly can. If we wake up early, wake up early. Go to bed late, go to bed late. We got to turn this thing around. Our goal is to win and as much as we possibly can, win as many games as we possibly can for as long as we can.

**Q. In the spring you were pretty invested in the women's basketball run. Why is that important?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I mean, it's part of the Arizona athletic program. I believe that I didn't just sign on to be the head football coach. I believe I signed on to be a great ambassador to the University of Arizona and the University of Arizona athletics. If there's an opportunity to go support another coach, first of all, I mean, Adia Barnes, she's an amazing coach, an amazing person. Right now she's number one in our building in terms of what she's accomplished.

But the chance to really support her, support our baseball team, softball team. If we weren't having an official visit, I would have been out in Omaha without a doubt. For me this is what we do. If you want to just coach football, go in the NFL, stay in the NFL. If you want to embrace a college community, you want to embrace pageantry, social media,

you want to embrace the idea of bringing 70,000 people or 60,000 people, however many people we can put in there, then go coach college. That's what I believe in.

I hope to be sitting next to Coach Lloyd on the bench for basketball games, as well.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

JEDD FISCH: I'm much more of a veteran than he is. It's been four weeks longer that I had the job than he did.

No, we've gone out for dinner numerous times. We spend a ton of time together. We share a lot of messages. We share a lot of acquaintances, a lot of people that we both know. He was at my house the other day. I had him get P.J. Carlesimo on the phone. I was telling him a story. 1989 I was 13 years old in New Jersey, P.J. was the head coach of Seton Hall Prep. They were in the national championship game. I said, He was my favorite coach.

He said, Let's call him right now.

It was pretty awesome talking to Coach Carlesimo. It's pretty awesome to have Tommy Lloyd in the building. We're going to do everything together as much as we can.

**Q. What went into the decision to open up practices again? Do you think that's a competitive advantage for you?**

JEDD FISCH: To open up practices? I don't know why you would ever close 'em personally. I'll close 'em during the season in terms of when it's true game planning week. We'll do whatever we need to do there to keep it open for as long as we can for the media to be able to meet with us for half hour, whatever it might be.

When it comes to training camp or spring football, isn't football great to go watch? For me to be able to have people come watch and be a part of it is awesome. Everybody wants to perform in front of others. It's an opportunity for our players to perform in front of other people, which I think is as cool as it gets.

I'd love for our media to see what we're doing. It's a lot better than them guessing. It's an opportunity for them to see how we interact, how we coach, what we do. No, I just feel like it's the right thing to do and that's why we do it.

**Q. I know you can't work with the players doing specific football stuff. Have you been able to form any initial impressions of Jordan McCloud at this point?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, the hardest position to evaluate

without a football would be the quarterback position because you can't ever see them throw. But we have had that two hours a week that we have the opportunity to meet with him. We've had two hours a week that we've been able to during that time also be able to do some drill work. We've been able to do some team runs and evaluate and watch how he is there.

I love just to see how he interacts with his teammates. Jordan is doing good. We got a nice three-headed monster, Jordan, Gunner and Will. We'd like to see one of them step up and be the guy. Right now we'll go 33, 33, 33 for 99 play practice.

**Q. Does Jordan come in at a disadvantage because he wasn't able to participate in spring and learn the playbook?**

JEDD FISCH: Yeah, I would hope so because those other guys, if they didn't get anything out of the coaching in the spring, we got major problems. I hope he's at a major disadvantage, but unfortunately I feel like he's just at a disadvantage. I'll talk to Coach Dougherty about that later.

No, I think he's doing a great job of trying to catch up, trying to learn this thing quick from what I understand. But, yeah, I mean, it's going to be hard because those guys took almost every single rep.

**Q. The year you had at Florida as a GA, working under Coach Spurrier, seeing you here today reminds me of the videos of Coach Spurrier meeting with the media. What kind of imprint did that year have on your approach to football?**

JEDD FISCH: I was at University of Florida seven years, undergrad, student assistant, grad assistant. I went to Florida because of Coach Spurrier. I believe he is the iconic coach. I put him up on the Mount Rushmore. I have probably watched everything I could that he's ever done. I hired his son on our staff. I hope to one day be even in the same conversation in terms of the way he manages his football team, the way he called offensive plays and the way he won games. We're trying to build our program and coaching in a similar way.

**Q. What is your favorite Spurrier one-liner or quip?**

JEDD FISCH: Oh, man, there's so many good ones, right? Like, I mean, you can't spell Citrus without UT. Always a classic. There's a lot of great ones out there. I learned a ton of football from Coach Spurrier. I'll never forget that.

**Q. You said regarding the quarterback derby in spring it was whoever moves the ball the best, is most**

**productive. Is there anything else you're looking for from those guys?**

JEDD FISCH: No. Whoever moves the ball the best in every period we have. Who moves the football, who gets us down in the red zone, who scores touchdowns. We'll have a lot of competitive practices. I believe we're going to have a very good defense this year. Let's see what we can do. See if we can move the ball. Whoever does that will be the starting quarterback.

**Q. Being picked last in the Pac-12 South, what is your reaction to that?**

JEDD FISCH: Figured as much, so we'll just have to go out there and play really well and see what happens. That's just on past performances. No one's seen our team, other than you. Did you pick us last? Don't answer that question.

**Q. No comment.**

JEDD FISCH: (Laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Coach.

JEDD FISCH: Thank you all. Have a great fall.

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