

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Hollywood, California, USA

Colorado Buffaloes

Karl Dorrell

Press Conference

KARL DORRELL: Good afternoon, everyone. This is my first official Media Day after being on the job for about 14, 15 months. Excited about being here. Excited to have a normal season of the process of football, which we were able to do at the end of the 2020 year.

A lot of great things that are happening within our program right now. We had a really good off-season, great spring. Players have done really well academically, as well. Had our best semester as a program in the history of the program academically when we finished the spring semester, just under 3.0 as a team.

There's some real positive things we're doing as a program.

Had a great summer. This is our last week training prior to us starting training camp on August 4th. A lot of positive momentum that's occurring right now within our program that we're buying into as a team.

We've had a couple of adjustments on our staff from last year. We hired a new strength coach. Done a great job with really giving our guys a chance to develop, particularly our young players, building our depth within our program.

We have a new defensive coordinator, that was the other significant change. He's a guy that has NFL experience and collegiate experience. He's been at Colorado a second time. This is my third time back at Colorado. This is his third or his second, excuse me, my third. I really like where the staff is, the makeup of our team. Everything's moving in the right direction.

As for the 2020 year, it was a positive step forward. I really felt like we accomplished a good deal of things in such a short period of time. That helped catapult us to having a good momentum going into this off-season. We expect to take that another step forward again going into this season in 2021.



There will be some new faces, but there are also some really significant faces that are back. We like how things are headed, where things are headed, and we feel that we're going to do some really good things in the future of this program.

We're excited about the future.

I guess with that being said, if there's anything else I need to say, I'd open it up for questions for everyone else.

Q. Obviously having that kind of weird season, you were hired late, things like that, but now having a full off-season, having last year, being able to assess this program, how much did that help you to be able to learn some things about this program before you made some changes?

KARL DORRELL: I think last season, I have to really take my hat off to our players and how they responded to me. The most significant thing that I did with our players was when I was hired on February 23rd last year, I spent that first week interviewing all of them in my office for 10 minutes, just getting a chance like an icebreaker kind of thing, getting a chance to get to know each and every one of them, what do they like to do outside of football, just an icebreaker discussion. Meet-and-greet, right, with the new head coach.

I did that individually with every one of our players. I think that action that I made created a sense of maybe we should trust this guy, maybe I should listen to what we're trying to get accomplished this year. Especially with all the restrictions and COVID, all that stuff, not having spring practice, not having summer, then we came in to October having our fall camp, our players just bought into every word that I said with our staff.

They gave us the benefit of the doubt in every circumstance. So when we practiced those 25 practices to get ready for a November start, they just did everything we asked them to do. We tried to do things in a way that was going to allow us to have some success. We didn't put the whole offense in. We didn't put the whole defense in. We only put what we thought we needed to function and play

well for six games. That was a really good thought in our minds that we wanted our guys to be able to execute.

So our guys did a great job of just going through that process, coaches and players, of getting ourselves a chance to compete and be successful. I'd say it ended up doing pretty well for us.

Q. The fact you guys did have success, having that success, do you think that helped enhance the trust they have in you?

KARL DORRELL: I hope so, I absolutely hope so (smiling). They did everything I've asked. It did kind of accumulate to being successful. We know that was just a step in the right direction. We didn't like the ending of our season. I think that's the other part that motivated us in the off-season with how that looks to make sure we don't look like that again.

These young men have done a great job, they really have. But I do think they have given me the benefit of the doubt. That's all I can ask for as a head coach.

Q. Your quarterback situation, over the spring J.T. ShROUT and Brendon Lewis battled it out. Then Sam Noyer transferred right after the spring. Approaching fall camp, can you let us know how this quarterback situation is shaking up? A two-man race, still wide open? Are you leaning on one particular quarterback?

KARL DORRELL: The fairest thing I would say is it's a two-man race, it really is. At first, if Sam was still in our program, he would be the guy that they would have to beat out, right? He was our returning starter last year. Sam decided to transfer. He's up at Oregon State now.

It's a two-man race between Brendon Lewis and J.T. ShROUT. We think they're both very qualified, capable players. If you remember what Brendon did in the bowl game, his first time playing college football end of the season in the bowl game, I would say he had a passing grade. He did really well. He did some positive things that I would say any first-year quarterback might have done poorly. He was able to do those things in a positive way.

So that confidence from the bowl game has given him a great level of confidence going through the whole off-season, going through spring. He's a completely different player now than where he was last fall.

I would say with J.T. ShROUT, being a kid that just transferred in, in a short period of time he digested our offense. He spent the overtime hours to do that to get himself a chance to compete.

Both of those guys have great leadership qualities as well along with their physical talent. They have really good leadership qualities. All of our players offensively respond to both of them in a positive way. It's not like they dislike one and like the other. Everybody on offense really thoroughly enjoy both of those guys under center. It's a competition in that two-man race with those two.

When will we make that determination? That will be somewhere in the middle of training camp, I would say. At least not until the first couple weeks. Trying to get all the information in. It's going to be a day-by-day test, right? They're going to be assessed on everything about how they run the offense, the mistakes they make, the plays that they do make, everything like that. We're going to account for everything as we go through that process.

But they know when it's all said and done, they're both all in about helping us be a factor in winning this season.

Q. When I saw you Friday at Coach Donahue's memorial service, I said we would want to talk about Nate Landman. How is his health? What are the expectations for him? What does he mean to the defense overall?

KARL DORRELL: Nate, his health report at this time, he's close to a hundred percent. We do anticipate him being a hundred percent by somewhere in the middle of training camp.

He is way ahead of schedule. If you know Nate in terms of how he plays, he presses the envelope on everything he does. He doesn't do anything half speed, half tilt, half assed - excuse me for saying that word. He's going to go all out.

He's going to be ready to play, there's no question in my mind. If you ask him that today, he's on the other side of the room, he'll tell you that.

He's a great leader for us. He's a catalyst. He's a guy that leads by not only what he says but also what he does. You wish you had 120 Nate Landmans on your team to have that mentality. He's really one of those key pieces to our defense.

Now, the better part of this thing is that we did build our defense through the portal and some other acquisitions on our team that he doesn't have to make every play, which is what he did the last couple years. It's going to be good to have other players around him that are really good players that he can just do his job and allow for those others to do theirs.

It's a good thing. But he's definitely our best leader.

Q. Former player, former coach in the Pac. How much has the Pac-12 changed since you were a player and a coach?

KARL DORRELL: Quite a bit. First of all, I was in the Pac-10 the last time I was in this conference with both Utah and Colorado weren't members.

I would say the most significant thing that I've seen that's changed is really social media. I didn't know I was gone really relatively that long. But 12 years in the NFL, then coming back, a lot has changed. The exposure that players have, the exposure that coaches have, the information that they can get at a moment's notice.

Recruiting is different now because recruiting is nationwide now. It used to be regional recruiting where you kind of recruited in your footprint. Because of the exposures, the media, everything they have within their fingertips, they can know about any program across the country. You're noticing that you're having players that are on the West Coast go all the way east to go to school, or down to the southeast to go to school. It used to be everybody stayed within their region.

That's because they're finding out more about other programs on a more intimate level than it's been in the past. So they have a lot of resources at their fingertips basically, okay? Those are the things that I would say are different now than what it was last time I was in the conference.

It's not necessarily meant for it to be a negative, but it's just a sign of the times. That's just where things are. Recruiting, it's an all-day, everyday process now. That's something you have to embrace as you go through this process and really enjoy it.

I'm a people person on an intimate level. I've really enjoyed that process of being back in college and understanding the recruitment side of it, getting to know the families and things like that.

But there's been significant change in answering your question as to when I was here last (smiling).

Q. On your receivers, Dimitri has played a lot, but a lot have given us a small sample size of their talent. How good is that group overall?

KARL DORRELL: That group has skill. The receiver group has skill. We're continually have to refine that skill

where the talent is consistent. That's the way I would say it.

I'm a hard-ass receiver coach, though, right? I've done that most of my career. There's definitely some really good talent in that group. It's young, but it's young. That's the part that they have to grow and have a level of consistency that needs to be better than where it is.

Q. A question about name, image and likeness. Has it tarnished the image, allure of college sports? Doesn't it come down to selling mom and dad on education and opportunities (indiscernible)?

KARL DORRELL: A couple different branches in that question.

The name, image and likeness, I think from my standpoint is positive. It's a positive thing. Just like how football has evolved into this machine. We have networks for all these conferences, right? A lot of money, a lot of earning power that these universities have. A lot of those dynamics are different 20 years ago than what they are now.

So I think we have to kind of embrace that sign of the times with our student-athletes. I am embracing it. I think that's a good thing, I really do.

It does come down to still you have to sell your school. What are the things that allow for Colorado to be a competitive program, a competitive university. So you still have to do those things.

But I will tell you this, though. Just like I said what's changed from when it was the Pac-10 to now the Pac-12, all those things with social media. The other thing that's changed is the fact that's a big part of it still, too, the exposure that a player and his family will have if he goes from university A or university B. That's now going to be an extra layer of information due to this new thing that's been amended that's in our (indiscernible) now. It's going to be another layer of information that's going to be considered for that process.

It's not just mom, dad, like the school, things like that. It might come to this is what this school has done for certain players versus what this school has done for certain players. It's another layer.

Now, we have to embrace that and move forward with it, do it in a productive way. But if we don't think that way as coaches, we're going to be left behind. We're going to have to be progressive on allowing these things to be positive impacts for our student-athletes and also utilizing that to help us in a recruiting fashion.

Q. Tell us about your thoughts about Cal both when you were a coach at UCLA and looking forward to this season's game, especially since one of the coaches you went up against when you were at UCLA, Justin Wilcox, is now your counterpart?

KARL DORRELL: It's funny, in our coaching profession, all of us are kind of a fraternity. We either coached with each other or coached against each other, played... All those things.

Knowing Justin, what he's done as a player and as a coach, he's been tremendous in his career. The great thing about our conference is that it's a very competitive conference, it really is. It's different where each and every week you have to be ready to play, you have to. If you're not, you're going to get beat. That's what I liked about the conference even back when I was at UCLA and now at Colorado, is that there is that parity in the conference.

Anyone can beat you in this conference if you're not ready to play. That's the best thing that I do draw from, is that it's really competitive, there's really great coaching, there's great players, there's great marquee players that are great standouts for this conference. There's a lot of really positive things about being back and going against some of the colleagues I've coached with or against, things like that.

We look forward to our season. We play nine games of our 12 are conference members. We know that's not an easy draw for any of us, playing nine conference teams in your schedule. We know that very fact that anybody can beat you in a given week.

It's a good conference. We expect it to be even better with our leadership that's been established with George. We feel very upbeat about where we're headed.

Q. In meeting with the commissioner, is there anything he said specifically that resonated with you the most, has you most excited about the future of the league?

KARL DORRELL: The thing that resonates with me that he said that I really liked is he said, We're going to make this a championship program or conference. That's what I want to hear. I want that expectation from our leader to tell us that this is all about winning championships.

Those are the things that I think all of us as coaches, if we have a commissioner that feels that way, too, we need to have that more relevance and significance in the CFP. That's what it tells me, is that we need to get more teams involved in that. I think he wants to help that process and

do the things that's necessary for us to get into that next step.

We're very encouraged with what he told us. That was a good pep talk he gave us yesterday. We're very encouraged with the direction we're headed.

Q. What kind of steps are you looking for to get the lead to that level that you all want?

KARL DORRELL: It's going to take some steps. If everyone is working to do those things, it's improving your recruiting, improving your graduation, things like that, keeping your staff intact. Those are the things that usually derail teams or programs for not having success.

We just got to continue to stay the course that we're on right now. Colorado is making those steps of progress that are allowing for us to be competitive. At some point in time we want to be relevant and be in the championship discussion. Those are the things we work on on a daily basis.

It's not going to take overnight success, it's going to take a gradual process to build those things. We're well on our way in going down that road.

Q. (No microphone.)

KARL DORRELL: Shannon, I mentioned to you guys earlier that's one of the changes I made going after the 2020 season, hire Shannon Turley, who has a great reputation of developing players. That's where Colorado is right now, is about developing our players.

We feel like we have the right person in that respect that's doing that. I think our players, he's instantly having credibility with our players. I can see the results in our players already in watching them train, what they look like physically. There's a lot of respect that Shannon has done in such a short period of time. I hired him in February, now it's mid July, end of July, that the team really believes in everything that he's been teaching them from a development standpoint.

It's been a real positive to have him onboard, leading that area, because our team is gaining confidence knowing that they're physically better than what they were a year ago.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

KARL DORRELL: I hope I shared some positive news and good stuff for you guys. Thank you.

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