

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Hollywood, California, USA

## UCLA Bruins Coach Chip Kelly Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach Kelly, welcome. Go ahead and give yourself an opening statement.

CHIP KELLY: Thank you. Good afternoon.

Always an exciting time of year to be here. Season starts for us next Friday. We get a chance to get back on the field. I've always said the best part of football is actually football. We get to get back to doing that.

We finished up last year strong, three big wins in conference to finish the season, plus-81-point differential. We had six players drafted off of last year's team, the most in the conference. Had another six players sign free agent contracts. So we have to replace twelve players that are now on NFL rosters, trying to compete, make teams in the National Football League.

We have 21 players on this current roster that have graduated already. 20 of them are in grad school. Because of COVID, I think we're a very old team. That experience I think will really help. We've had great leadership from that group of guys.

The two players we have here today, Stephan Blaylock, fifth-year senior who will start for five years for us, really is the captain on the back end of the secondary; then Jon Gaines, an offensive lineman for us, has started every position on the offensive line. Jonny graduated college in three years. He's getting his master's degree. He'll get his master's degree. He'll finish this December with an undergraduate and a master's degree in four and a half years. I think those two guys kind of epitomize what we're looking for in football players and are great representatives at UCLA.

With that we'll open it up and take some questions.

**Q. The running game has been such a bread and butter of your systems dating back to Oregon, in particular the two-back system. Obviously this year,**

**big year expected from Zach Charbonnet, pre-season Doak Walker Award winner, really going to have a centerpiece season. Who are you seeing as emerging as RB 2 as a complement to Zach?**

CHIP KELLY: That's a great question. Zach obviously had an outstanding year. I think he's one of the top running backs coming back in the country. Keegan Jones, who will be back for -- I think it's year four now with Keegan, he's done a really nice job for us. Had a great spring. Is working extremely hard.

Kazmeir Allen, who we moved to receiver, but has cross-trained as a running back, also has experience playing there. We have a young freshman in Deshun Murrell who we red-shirted last year who we're expecting a lot out of.

There's a group of guys in there that we're trying to get to emerge. Obviously Zach being No. 1 makes you really comfortable.

**Q. Speaking of Kaz Allen and the spread system, having that versatility at a rover position, how do you see Kaz Allen? Does he have the opportunity to be that Swiss Army knife for the offense this year?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I agree with you. I think he's a versatile returner for us. He's really made an impact as a wide receiver. I think it was four years ago he was the state hundred meter champ here in California. He obviously has game-breaking speed. Has tremendous vision and instincts when he's running the ball.

Our job is to try to find out how many different ways we can get Kaz the ball.

**Q. Talking about Stephan, I think he is one of two guys that's played every game since you've been coach. How important is it to have that kind of consistency?**

CHIP KELLY: Good point. We've always talked about the best ability is availability at times. The fact that Blay has not missed a game, he's really been a stalwart for us back



there. He's truly the captain of our defense. He makes all the calls on the secondary, back end. Having him at one safety and Mo Osling at the other safety -- Mo is a six-year kid coming back -- makes you feel good.

I think it's a credit to him on how he takes care of his body, the time and work that he puts in. The fact that he hasn't missed a game is really kind of special. He has a chance to set a record for most games ever played at UCLA.

**Q. Jake Bobo made the Biletnikoff watch list last week. He's a type of receiver you haven't seen too much of on this UCLA roster over the past few years. How are you going to be able to use him and have him connect with Dorian this season?**

CHIP KELLY: Him and Dorian already have a great rapport going through the spring, working together. Jake has an unbelievable work ethic. To have a 6'5" kid on the perimeter as an outside receiver, 220 pounds, he led the ACC in catches last year at Duke. I think everybody, when you play Duke, knew he was going to get the ball thrown to him. He still made the catches. He can make contested catches.

He's got an amazing work ethic. He's a really, really smart kid, which I think kind of goes hand-in-hand with being a Duke grad. Doing a great job in grad school for us now.

Having a weapon like that on the perimeter that can beat one-on-one coverage is going to dictate some double coverage at times. I think it will open some things up for other people. If they choose to cover him one on one, I think Dorian is going to be really excited about that.

**Q. You're entering year five with Dorian as your quarterback. That is an eternity in the ranks of college football. How has Dorian grown as a leader and player?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, it's very were. I don't think there's many situations like that in college football right now. But I think he's grown in all aspects. Obviously he's physically matured from when he came in as a freshman five years ago. The work he's put in physically in the weight room, trying to make his body stronger, bigger, faster. He's done a great job there.

I just think the amount of snaps he's taken are invaluable. I think that's the one thing that the NFL is as looking at, how many snaps has this kid gotten at the college level so that he's prepared for the pro game. The chance that he had to come back and play another year, get some more snaps underneath his belt I think is beneficial. I know when he made the decision to come back, we were all very excited.

**Q. A couple key transfers added to the secondary. On paper this feels like it's going to be a secondary that's going to make some plays this year. What have you seen thus far?**

CHIP KELLY: Very competitive in the spring. I think we got size now in the secondary with Kirkwood and some of the guys we have on the perimeter. 6'3"-plus corners. Mo is a 6'2" kid. Kenny Churchwell played really, really well for us in the spring at safety. Kenny is a 6'2" kid. Blay is a big, solid, downhill, physical player. Azizi Hearn is a 6'2", 205 kid.

From what we came into to where we are now with our secondary, our secondary looks like what a secondary should look like.

**Q. In regards to Dorian and the legacy he's left in the Pac-12, college football, do you feel like he still gets the respect that his production warrants?**

CHIP KELLY: Can you repeat that? I missed the first part.

**Q. With the legacy that Dorian has left behind at UCLA, do you still feel like he gets the respect that he deserves nationally?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, I don't really get into what's gone on nationally, how people talk about other people. I know within our program he gets that respect, because he earns it every single day, from our players. I think everybody will be excited. We're looking forward to him having an outstanding season for us.

**Q. Obviously everybody is talking about USC, what they're going to do, all the upgrades. The way you beat them, do you feel like UCLA truly runs the city after all these years? Do you feel like UCLA truly runs L.A.?**

CHIP KELLY: I am not going there (laughter).

I think it's an historic rivalry because you have two Power Five schools that are in the same city. There's not any rivalry where there's such proximity between the two schools. There's so many players at SC that played high school with the kids on our team. They played high school ball together, but now they play college ball against each other. I think that's what makes the rivalry unique. There is such a split and a faction of there may be even families that some are SC, some are UCLA. I think it's what makes rivalries great.

Who runs the city, who doesn't run the city, I'll leave that up

to the voters, I guess.

**Q. With the eight wins, historically UCLA has had moments where they've captured national headlines. When you look at your coaching career, the teams you had at Oregon, where do you feel this team is going to establish itself amongst all the teams you've coached?**

CHIP KELLY: Teddy Roosevelt said comparison is the thief of joy. I'm never going to compare this team to a team I coached 10 years ago. Had some special teams when I was there, special memories with special players.

I'm really excited about this football team because of the type of kids we have in our program right now. They excel in the classroom. They excel in the community. They finished the season off very strong last year. We're just excited about getting an opportunity to get out on the field and getting going this year.

**Q. With your tight ends, with Dulcich being drafted by Denver, how is that sorting itself out?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, we were excited. I think Greg was the No. 2 tight end off the board. I was actually -- Russell Wilson texted me before the round started to ask questions about him. I figured they may be interested in him a little bit. Really excited. Greg is just an unbelievable story. Came to UCLA as a walk-on wide receiver and left as being one of the best tight ends in school history at a school that's had some unbelievable tight ends, with Charles Arbuckle, Mercedes Lewis, a bunch of guys like that.

The overall depth we have at the tight end position is as good as it's been since I've been there, with Mike Martinez, Mike Ezeike, Hudson Habermehl, Dave Priebe, and then we added two freshmen in Carsen Ryan and Jack Pedersen.

We're really excited about that group. We feel like we can play three and four tight ends at a time. They're versatile, can play multiple positions. They can be receivers, running backs, but they can be in the hand-on-the-ground tight ends.

I'm excited about our tight end class. I'll take our tight end depth over any team in the country right now.

**Q. What have the last four weeks been like for you since the news that UCLA is going to the Big Ten in two years? More in terms of recruiting? What's the reception been?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, it's been interesting, to say the least.

But I think the two things that always have been a priority for us has been, number one, our team, and then, number two, this season.

I think guys that are here today, like Blay and Jon Gaines and Dorian and Zach, they won't be here in two years. I think when I got the news that this was going to happen, that was my first question: When? Then when we found out it's two yours, I think that puts a little bit different spin on it.

Our sole focus and attention is making the 2022 season as memorable as it possibly can be for our players. I talked to Merton Hanks after it happened. Between Merton and George, they both assured me the Pac-12 is supportive of everything we're doing. If we're members for the next two years, they're going to do everything they can to support us as a member.

My experience dealing with the administrators, George and Merton are as classy as they can be. It's obviously a unique situation. I've never been in it before. But I think the biggest thing is to focus on what we can control. What we can control is right now and the '22 team. That's what our focus is on.

**Q. What kind of impact do you anticipate the move to the Big Ten having on UCLA recruiting?**

CHIP KELLY: It's been positive so far. I think the conversations that we've had with the kids that are in high school right now, because those are the guys it impacts, we've noticed that as an uptick as a coaching staff and have talked about that.

I think it's something that will play itself out over the next two years.

**Q. Do you feel it will change the dynamics not only in Los Angeles but across the West Coast or nationally?**

CHIP KELLY: I don't know. I don't know if expansion is done. I don't have a crystal ball. I don't know where this is. I think people last year at this point in time, we all sat in here as a conference of 12 and talked about what Tennessee and Oklahoma were doing going to the SEC. Now we sit here talking as a conference of 12/10. I don't know what's next domino is to drop. I don't have a crystal ball.

One thing I do know about this game, everybody complains about the game, where it's headed, but I think the product on the field is as good as it's ever been. I think the coaching that's going on in college football right now is second to none.

I think when you can get engaged in the players that I had a chance to meet today, the two kids we brought today, the best thing about college football is the players. We have some tremendous players. I think it's incumbent upon the people in charge to kind of work out all the differences that are going on at a higher level because the resource we have right now, which are our players, should be the attention.

We got to keep the main thing the main thing. The young kids that we have right now that are playing football are awesome. I've had interactions with Ron Stone Jr. at Washington State today, a great man, Kyu Kelly at Stanford, Tanner McKee at Stanford and the rest of the guys. They're special. We should be talking about them. We should be talking about the season that all of them are going to have here in 2022 and not talking about expansion at this point in time.

**Q. Does it impact the type of players that you recruit knowing that in two years you'll be competing against, say, Big Ten offenses?**

CHIP KELLY: No, I don't think our recruiting model changes. Really we don't talk about recruiting, we talk about team building. We're a developmental university. We need to recruit kids that want to be developed both academically, athletically, socially and spiritually.

That won't change what we're looking for, what we think fits at UCLA. The fact that we have to play some games a little bit farther away from home doesn't affect that or change that.

We're not going to drastically change what we do from that standpoint. We'll see how it shakes out in two years. I don't think anybody has a crystal ball, what it's going to look like going forward.

But I want to recruit Stephan Blaylocks, I want to recruit Zach Charbonnets, I want to recruit Jon Gaineses, and we'll continue to recruit those type of young men.

**Q. We hear a lot about chemistry in the locker room. You guys have six new assistant coaches. Is there such thing as chemistry in a coaches' room?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, there is. I don't think we have that many. I think it's five. I think we're very conscious of who we bring on staff, the same way as the players we bring in. To add a UCLA legend like Ken Norton Jr., get a chance to get Ken to come back home, I think everybody in Los Angeles knows Ken, and to add him to staff was awesome.

It was neat for me to watch our defensive staff with Billy McGovern and Ikaika Malloe and Chad Kauha'aha'a all jibe with Brian Norwood. Then we added one on offense. We lost our special teams coordinator to be the offensive coordinator at Nevada. Bring Jeff Faris in who we knew had been recruited from the West Coast a long time for Duke.

I really enjoy our staff. I think we have a bunch of men that are great mentors, leaders and teachers. It's a fun group to be around. I think our players model kind of the relationships that our staff has. I think our staff is extremely close.

**Q. You've talked about the importance of academics with your players here. Taking these flights back East, playing Rutgers, Penn State, Maryland, how is that going to impact student welfare from a time crunch, what it does to bodies taking long flights?**

CHIP KELLY: In football or Olympic sports?

**Q. Well, all.**

CHIP KELLY: I can't speak for Olympic sports, but in football it's a one-day trip. I don't think the impact that it has really truly affects anything from a human body experience.

When I was in the National Football League, we did a sports study science of games played on East Coast and West Coast. It happens all the time in the National Football League. You're only there for probably 18 hours total. You fly in the night before, go to sleep, get up in the morning, touch your toes, play a game, get on a plane and go back.

I don't think it will affect our sport, to really be honest with you. I don't think it's that big a deal.

Again, when you look at it, you only play four away games in the year. In the course of 12, that's 25% of your games. Where are they? One of the away games could be USC. I know we're not getting on a plane to go to SC. So that's going to be a short bus ride. So I hope that doesn't take too much out of our guys. You can go to Lincoln, Nebraska, it's 1,149 miles from our campus. Seattle is 1,135 miles from our campus. Sometimes we go on farther trips in our conference now than we would if we do that. I haven't looked at it very much that I can comment any longer.

**Q. How far is your campus from Piscataway, New Jersey?**



CHIP KELLY: It's 2,765 miles (smiling). Four-and-a-half-hour flight. If you're going west to east it's longer because the weather goes across the country. Coming back would be a little bit longer, so... We hope that we win because then you don't worry about how long the ride is on the way back. That's incumbent upon us that we take care of business if we do play at Rutgers.

**Q. Would that NFL experience help doing that?**

CHIP KELLY: If I had those players, it would help a lot (laughter).

I don't know. I mean, again, we're talking things two years out. Again, it's an awkward situation for everybody. I've had a great experience in this league. I owe my life to the Pac-12. I appreciate what this league has done. But I was in this league and it started as the Pac-10. Early in my career we added Colorado and Utah. We were all excited about adding people.

It is what it is. It's realignment. It's going on. Governed by television. Those are things out of my control. As I try to preach to my players, we talked about modeling things for them earlier, let's control what we can control. I didn't control any of it. I found out about a half hour before everybody else. I found out probably after John (indiscernible) found out because he finds out before everybody finds out.

It is what it is. I didn't have a vote. I didn't have a say. I'm going to coach my guys. Hang out with the players I have now. We love 'em. Close to them. Hope we have a good experience in this whole thing. The focus for us is the 2022 season.

**Q. Focusing on this season, your first three are at home, non-conference. Looks like an easier non-conference schedule compared to the past.**

CHIP KELLY: Do you know why? This is ironic.

**Q. Michigan was dropped.**

CHIP KELLY: The game got dropped, so... It's crazy how the world turns around, huh?

**Q. What about the early kickoffs your first three games?**

CHIP KELLY: We practice in the morning, so I love early kickoffs. I'd love to play early, get up and go. Our internal clock, we're on the field every day at 9 a.m. We're used to that.

That's something else that's conducive if you have to play a game in an East Coast game time. An early kick wouldn't affect us because you're going to kick off at 11:00 on the East Coast. We have two early kicks here on the West Coast. We're used to playing early anyway. If for some reason we get put in that slot -- I know some of the people have talked about playing an earlier game. We did it once during COVID. We played a Sunday morning game versus Cal at 9 a.m.

College kids are resilient. They just want to play, get up and play. I think we all do the same thing. We don't want to wait around all day, we just want to get up and play football.

The fact we have to play a game at 11, we're excited about playing a game at 11. If you tell us we've got to play at night, we'll play at night. If you tell us we've got to play in a parking lot, we'll play in a parking lot.

**Q. About this Big Ten move, have you talked to any of your underclassmen about the fact that some of them might not be too excited to play far from home, or is it something you will only address in a couple years?**

CHIP KELLY: Yeah, we're not moving. Just so no one gets that -- we're not moving school or anything like that. We might play a game or two a year. We played at Cincinnati earlier in our career here. We played games on the road.

Our players get excited about the challenges of playing against really, really good teams. If that's going to be the case two years from now, then that will be the case two years from now. The younger classmen we talked to on the team are excited. They're excited about the opportunity to play football.

We're really focusing as we talk to them about it is that's something that's going to happen later. What's going to happen now is the '22 season. There's a lot of talented football players in this conference. This is going to be a great year for the Pac-12. We're excited about that, so...

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

CHIP KELLY: All right. Thank you.

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