

Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

San Francisco, California, USA

Colorado Buffaloes

Coach JR Payne

Quay Miller

Jaylyn Sherrod

Women's Head Coach



every day to be better than we were a year ago to make sure that that is not just a dream but is a reality for us in March.

Q. I wanted to follow up on that question, because it has been since Ceal Barry was the head coach that Colorado has been able to produce at least back-to-back NCAA Tournament appearances. How important is it to be a program that is kind of building tournament after tournament bids, and what makes you confident about this group that they can continue the success that they had last year?

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I mean, I think we've built a culture to where every single day we're pushing each other to be great. I mean, I don't think -- teams that do well in March, they're not great just in March, they're great in August, they're great in September, they're great in October.

They push each other in that way. Our team does a really good job of that, led by our upperclassmen, in particular Jaylyn who has been with us for four years. Sets an incredible standard of work ethic, competitive spirit, and just a drive to be great.

I think that is pretty firmly established in our program, and I would say that's why we feel that we can do that this year.

Q. Talking about trying to replace what Maya did for you not just offensively, but sort of all around, defensively, rebounding, how do you try to replace someone like that, and then when it goes over to Quay, with Maya gone, with Peanut gone, do you see your role increasing instead of being that sixth player that you were last year?

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I think any time you lose great seniors, whether it's 1, 3, 4, a 5, there's a void that's left on the team. Whether that's vocal presence, whether that's point production, whether that's someone that talks in a huddle, things like that.

What I love most about this year's team is that everyone is embracing the challenge of being better.

JR PAYNE: I guess just thank you all for having us here at Pac-12 media day. It's been an awesome day. We always love this event that the Pac-12 puts on because we're surrounded by excellence all day long, great coaches, great media, great players, and everybody really has a vision of how to navigate what is murderer's row of the Pac-12 Conference. We love it, though, but it's been an awesome day and we're excited for our season.

Q. JR, I put you guys in a group with Utah, Washington State, programs that really have made in the past couple years a big jump, gotten back into the tournament for the first time in a long time, changed sort of the trajectory of the program. How does that coming into this season, like what's changed? In terms of expectation, internal, external? How do you look at the way you've been able to elevate the program and what happens next?

JR PAYNE: Well, I would say we're very proud of the amount of work we've put in to elevate the program. And I would agree with you, I think the three teams you named are programs that definitely have worked hard to get to where we are.

But we're excited about this season. We definitely have a different mindset in that last year -- everybody wants to go to the Final Four, right? Everyone wants to win a National Championship. But our goal was to get to the NCAA Tournament. It hadn't been done in almost a decade in Boulder, so that was our goal.

When we got there and didn't go as deep as we wanted to in the NCAA Tournament, the goal quickly changed to we want to go deeper into the NCAA Tournament.

I think these guys have led the charge in that we're working



So whether that's -- Jaylyn has been a great player all four years, but really challenging her to speak more. Like the team needs to hear your voice more, things like that. She's embracing that, and every single player on our team is.

No one is trying to be Peanut. No one is trying to be Maya. Everyone is trying to be a better version of who they are and what they were. I think when we're able to do that, it creates a very cohesive group of players that are just trying to be great.

I think that's how you fill the void of graduating seniors.

QUAY MILLER: Yeah, like J said, just trying to be better than I was last year in every standpoint, a better leader, better in myself. Not really looking at what we've lost but how we can be better from it and build off what they have taught us with their years being here.

Q. For the players, kind of along the lines of those first couple questions, reaching the NCAA Tournament, what has that done in the locker room, in your workouts as far as just raising the bar of expectations and maybe accountability within your program?

JAYLYN SHERROD: I would say that reaching the tournament just like set the foundation, but it made all of us hungry to get back there. And not just get back there, but actually advance deeper, like Coach J said. And I think coming from last season, I feel like it was just a foundation. It was just the start of where we think we can go.

So this is something that we plan to continue throughout this season, as well.

Q. JR, you can start with it's an interesting blend of really good veterans coming back and then some freshmen, as well. Can you help us understand the dynamics coaching the veterans with the integration of the freshmen, and then veterans up there on the stage, Quay, both you guys, about bringing the freshmen along and them understanding the importance of impacting your team and not waiting.

JR PAYNE: Yeah, it's always an interesting -- especially now with the transfer portal things are even more interesting in the spring and going into summer, the dynamics of teams and how they shape and shift.

I think the strength of our team is in our veterans, as most ball clubs are. But we have some really good veterans that have played a lot in the Pac-12, had a tremendous amount of success individually and collectively in the Pac-12. That's the group that we will rely on.

Now, we have a couple new players that we think are going to have a big impact on our team. They fill voids that we needed. They're going to be really important pieces to our puzzle this year.

But we're going to rely on these guys. Kindyll Wetta, Tameiya Sadler, Frida Formann. We have a lot of really good players back.

I love that our upperclassmen this summer took a lot of pride in trying to really get to know our new players, take them out to lunch, spend time with them, who are you -- learning those types of things as a way to kind of embrace and welcome them into our team.

Q. JR, you haven't had to deal with a lot of staff turnover during your time but you had a chance this year to bring in Shelley Sheetz, obviously a CU legend. What has she brought to the program?

JR PAYNE: Yeah, most people know Shelley Sheetz. In Boulder she is just known as the GOAT. She's one of the best players to ever wear a Colorado uniform, and we've been trying to get Shelley to come back for several years now, and she finally said yes. It's been incredible to have her back. She's someone that can speak to these guys as a coach. She can speak to them as a mentor.

She can speak to them as a professional basketball player, as someone that's just been around the game a very long time, and I think it's been really great, especially for our point guards, to have someone with that type of experience and knowledge that can kind of give a different perspective almost as a new coach.

We love having Sheetz as part of our program, and I think she's going to really help us in a lot of ways.

Q. For all of you guys, as I have watched you over the years, I feel like Colorado has become -- has transformed from a program that hoped to win that now expects to win. Jaylyn, to you and to Quay, what do you think was the turning point for Colorado basketball?

JAYLYN SHERROD: For me, I think -- personally I've always been a player, like underdog mentality. I'm 5'7" but I feel like I walk around like I'm 6'3". That's always been my mentality. I feel like just bringing that to the program and having other people around me with that same mentality, I think that was overall the turning point to where I think Coach J said it earlier, but last year we walked into every game like we could beat whoever, and it didn't matter the name across the jersey.

The idea was they lace up their shoes the same way we do. We all go to practice. We all put on a uniform. So why can't we win?

QUAY MILLER: I think the turning point for me was joining a program that expected to win and it not being a hope and it being an expectation, being able to compete at the level that I knew I could compete at, trusting myself and understanding that if I want to elevate my game, I have to approach the game at a more mature standpoint.

And I felt that's what Colorado did. That's what made me -- that was my turning point. Just okay, so this is the only team that could compete with Stanford, and I know that at my last school, I was going into the Stanford games like it's about to be a long night.

Just coming to Colorado and seeing that they're going to -- they're preparing for Stanford to beat them, and they're going to be upset if they don't, for me, that was just a difference. I've never approached a Stanford game like that until I got here, so I would say that was my turning point. Just watching their game in my practice, their overtime game when they beat Stanford.

JR PAYNE: Can I just share a quick story on what you asked? Jaylyn's freshman year we opened the season at Oregon, and it was a beat-down. It was not pretty. But it was Jaylyn's first conference game ever, four or five years ago, and the score was super lopsided.

It was awful. I remember whoever it was the reporter after the game, first college game, what do you think, and the first thing out of her mouth, she looked come at the camera and said, they still have to come through Boulder, and it was like, dang. That's, I mean, confidence.

But Jaylyn, speaking to that, that's how she's wired. But for the first time she's surrounded by people who are also wired that way. So most of you guys probably don't remember that story, but I remember even as her coach being like, hell, yeah, they've got to come through Boulder. I loved it, and it's fun to have a program of people like that now.

Q. What is the secret sauce when it comes to beating Stanford? I'm sure South Carolina is paying attention right now.

JR PAYNE: Well, we've only beaten them once I will say at Colorado, at least in recent years, but it is, it's always a great game. I think part of it is just between what the two said. We really believe that we can win, and we believe that we will win. Like Quay said, they kind of hoped it wouldn't get out of hand, but we're not afraid of anybody.

I think not that other people are, but I think that's something that we take a lot of pride in. We prepare to win, no matter who it is, and we try to be strategic in what we think we can do and will do. Let's just hope it's going to be another great couple games this year.

Q. JR, since your team has been part of it, the inter-conference movement, the 10 players that have moved around this season from one Pac-12 team to another, what do you make of it? What impact do you think it has? What are your thoughts on all of that movement within the conference?

JR PAYNE: Hmm, that's an interesting one. I mean, if the conference -- I think it's not surprising. I'll start with that. It's not surprising because all of us recruit the same players. So like example we recruited Quay out of high school. So when Quay went into the transfer portal, we already knew her. We had a relationship with her, so it made sense that she might come to a place that she already has an established relationship.

I think you could probably say that about all of the players within our conference that transferred. I think our coaches in this league do a really great job of staying above board, being civil, doing things the right way, and so I think we all have a lot of respect for each other.

I'm sure it's a little bit awkward. I don't have any old players here, but I'm sure it's a little bit different for people that are here with other teams now.

But people want to be part of the conference of champions. It's named that for a reason. It's not surprising that people would want to stay in the West Coast and stay in this conference.

Q. For either Jaylyn or Quay, we've heard a lot good the mentality of this team, that you guys expect to win games. But beyond that, with the talent you have around you, what do you like about kind of your teammates and the rosters that you guys have that leads you to believe that all right, we are going to be very competitive, we're going back to the NCAA Tournament this year?

JAYLYN SHERROD: I would say that I think we bring back -- we lost a lot, but I think we bring back a lot of experience, like Coach J was saying, Kindyll, Frida, Tam, Tay. We bring back a lot of people who played last year. They might not have played a lot, but they played.

I think when you have people who already have been in that culture and they're on the team that got to the

tournament, as well, so they know what it takes to get there, so I think we bring back a lot of experience.

We add freshmen who have been -- we've been trying to cultivate them into the program and they've been doing a great job of that. They take pride in that, too. I think it's just we bring back a lot of experience, and we have like great leaders, as well, that have set the foundation.

Q. Expectations can be a burden, but it's also pretty cool that now the expectations are a lot higher. It's not a surprise when you guys win a lot of games and who you beat along the way. Please discuss how fun it is to have high expectations and to wear that burden. I think that's cool as heck.

QUAY MILLER: I think that -- yeah, I think that it's also cool. I think that it holds us accountable to know that we're expected to do so highly of things, and I think that just does nothing but motivate us and push us to live up to the standards that we're holding for ourselves and others are holding for us.

I think that's what this team brings back to a lot, since we do have a lot of returners and vets, we set the tone. It's all about how we approach practice, how we approach games, how we approach the whole standpoint of all of it, even the school side.

I think that with that, we're able to help each other live up to these standards and hold each other accountable to these high standards.

JAYLYN SHERROD: I love a challenge. I just like it. It's just in my makeup, and I just like challenging myself to be better. That was one of the reasons -- I graduated, but one of the reasons I came back was I was telling Coach, I feel like it's a fresh start and it's a new challenge for myself as a leader to grow into being a vocal leader and just sharing what I've been through at CU with everyone else.

I think for me, I just love a challenge, and I feel like this year, it's challenging, but at the same time, I'm just excited to overcome it and at the end of the day be like, we did what we said we was going to do.

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