

# Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

San Francisco, California, USA

## Colorado Buffaloes Coach Tad Boyle Nique Clifford Tristan da Silva Men's Head Coach



Ivy League, Ethan Wright from Princeton, and Jalen Gabbidon from Yale.

We feel like graduate transfers bring a certain amount of experience. They've done what they set out to do, which is graduate from college. They've graduated from whatever institution they went to. Jeriah Horne went to Tulsa, graduated, and now they're looking for an extra year to see what they can do.

So they usually come in with an attitude of I've got one year, let's make the most of it. Ethan and Jalen have both done that. They're coming from winning programs, Yale and Princeton. Well coached, big-time culture guys that understand the team comes first. We really shy away from a lot of four-year transfers because you don't know what you're going to get.

Usually they're transferring for a reason. Not saying we'll never do that or take that, but we're very, very cautious if we do that.

The other kid we have that's new, a transfer, was a junior college transfer, and he started his career at Northeastern, then went to Indian Hills Community College, J'Vonne Hadley, and he's going to be a terrific addition as well.

So the three guys we brought in, even though they're transfers, they're not your typical four-year transfers. Two are graduate, and one is a JUCO kid that started out at Northeastern. All bring something to the table, and you're going to see a lot of those guys as well.

**Q. Through the scrimmages you've had so far, what have you learned from those showcases and who's really stood out and risen to the occasion in those opportunities?**

TAD BOYLE: We've learned a lot. We've learned a lot as a team. These two guys have had, again, great off-seasons. What you want to see in those scrimmages, whether it's intersquad scrimmages or against somebody else, you want to see what have they added to their game? What have they improved upon?

JESSE HOOKER: We'll welcome to the main stage now Colorado head coach Tad Boyle and student-athletes Nique Clifford and Tristan da Silva.

Coach, I'll give you a few moment for opening remarks and then turn it over for questions.

TAD BOYLE: It's good to be back in San Francisco for another media day. Real excited about our team this year. We've got some really good returning players who are going to need to step up into different roles than what they've had in years past, and two of them are right here.

We lost some really good players off last year's team, but I love where our program is right now. We've had great continuity in our coaching staff. We've had great continuity with our players, and these are two examples of the development, I think, that our staff has done when they both came in as freshmen.

Now they're both going into junior year, and they'll be breakout players for us this year, and we've got a couple others on our roster as well. So great to be with you.

**Q. Tad, obviously player development has been kind of the big pillar of your program throughout your tenure in boulder. Obviously times have changed. You have three transfers on the roster this year. How have you and your staff gone about adjusting to this new landscape and kind of plugging those holes with the transfer portal?**

TAD BOYLE: It's interesting, we haven't taken a lot of four-year transfers at Colorado. We've had a handful of them in the 12 years I've been there. But we really look at the graduate transfers as a way to plug holes in your roster, and we've got two of them this year, both from the



Both these guys, along with guys like Lawson Lovering, Luke O'Brien, K.J. Simpson, Julian Hammond, we've had a lot of guys who have shown what they can do in those scrimmages.

We still have a lot to get better at. Our transition defense may be the worst in the country right now. Just ask these guys, we've watched film on that. So there's always things to work on.

Again, you want to see have your players been in the gym? Have they worked on their games? These guys certainly have, and I think you're going to see a lot of breakout players for Colorado this year.

**Q. Tad, you've been in the league a long time. Just your thoughts on what stands out, what's unique about this league this season, the teams that are in it?**

TAD BOYLE: It's funny, when you do the group photo and you see all the players, and I look at guys like ^ Jaime Jaquez and Tyler Campbell, I'm like, I can't believe they haven't graduated yet. I can't wait to see them on the other side.

But there's a lot of good returning players throughout the league. I think you get so dialed in to your program, I try not to look at recruiting and stuff that's going on at other programs. My assistant coaches tell me. Sometimes I'll remember, sometimes I won't.

But then you come to a day like this and you see what everybody else has got, obviously we've got some terrific players in this league, some terrific coaches, some really good programs. So it kind of gets your juices flowing, your competitive juices flowing, and you know another season's upon us.

This is a great league. I think we've got to win games in November and December. We've got to gain some credibility nationally, and the only way you do that is by beating good quality nonconference opponents. We all have an opportunity to get that done. Last year we didn't get it done, and it hurt us. It hurt us as a program. This year hopefully we can all take a step in the right direction.

**Q. For the players, you guys were picked sixth in the preseason poll announced this morning, and typically in this program, and certainly you guys this couple years, the team has typically outperformed the projection from the preseason. Do you guys take these sort of things to heart? Do you use it as motivation, and do you kind of expect to go out and try to prove people wrong again this year?**

TRISTAN da SILVA: I'm going to just take this first. First and foremost, we focus on ourselves. I think that's the most important thing. But it's definitely an outside influence that we look at and we try to prove people wrong, try to be more hungry than people assume.

So it's definitely going to be one of the things we look at once the season comes around and once it's on, that we can reference back to and use it as extra motivation.

**Q. Coach, you are going to be the first Pac-12 team that makes a road trip for the Pac-12/SWAC challenge this year? You have the first game on the schedule at Grambling State. Just curious kind of what activities you have planned around that game because I know it's also an educational experience for the players. Your thoughts on this series? And for the players, what's it like for you to be a part of this series?**

TAD BOYLE: A lot of the educational things we're going to do will probably be up until that trip. Once we get on the plane and go to Grambling, we're going there to win. We're going to do some things while we're there; the itinerary hasn't been shared with me yet.

But from my standpoint, we're going to use that week leading up to that game to help educate our players and our coaches and everybody in our program, manager, about the historical significance of HBCUs and specifically maybe Grambling and what's gone on in the past, and it's a great opportunity for us to reflect on that and get these guys to understand what these colleges and what these programs have been through through the years.

It's a great time to look at history and reflect and understand more about that process.

NIQUE CLIFFORD: It's going to be a great opportunity for us as a team and our conference to go on these HBCU trips. We have a lot of black student-athletes on our team, so it's going to be great to learn that history and be able to embrace that.

And it's just another opportunity for us to compete at a high level against good teams who are somewhat overlooked. So we're definitely excited for the trip, and we're ready to take care of business.

**Q. There's a lot made about the guys who aren't back from last year. For those who you're around every day, what's going to surprise fans about this team? What or who, I guess, is going to surprise fans?**

NIQUE CLIFFORD: I think we have an exciting young group of guys. It's a whole new team than last year. We

lost Evan Batty, Jabari Walker, some really key players. So we're excited to have a new group and new faces in Boulder that our fans can be excited about, watching a whole new team.

We have a really deep team, I feel like. So a lot of guys that could play a bunch of different positions. So we have a lot of versatility.

I think we're really excited just going into this year to show people what we could do.

TRISTAN da SILVA: I agree. Same thing. Completely different look from last year's team. A lot of people that left from last year to this year, and the roles have kind of changed. We're really looking forward to it.

I love playing with these guys. I love competing out there with them, putting it on the line were them. It's going to be -- I feel like we've got a really unselfish group of guys, high energy, high character guys. It's going to be a lot of fun stepping out there on the court with them.

**Q. Tad, given all that, how close are you to kind of figuring out the rotation? Do you have clarity at this point of how that works, or is it still a work in progress?**

TAD BOYLE: As Nique said, we're going to be a deep team. It's interesting because we're probably going to start Lawson Lovering, our seven foot sophomore, at center. He's a unique player and somebody who's different from anyone in our program. He's much improved, much more confident, big and strong.

When he comes out of the game, Tristan may start at the three spot, and when Lawson comes out, Tristan may move over to the four spot -- or the five spot, excuse me.

If J'Vonne Hadley is in the game, he may play the five and Tristan may play the four. So these two guys are really versatile.

But I think with our team this year, especially on the front line, we're going to have to kind of mix and match and figure things out.

Then on the wing, having guys like Luke O'Brien and Nique and some of the new guys that are coming in, Jalen Gabbidon from Yale, Ethan Wright in our backcourt, we're going to have a lot of versatility.

You're always going to have injuries. You don't want to have too many of them, but you have to adjust accordingly. I think our team is built to sustain that, and we've had

some guys out of practice. But we don't skip a beat because our depth is going to be a major factor for us this year as we go through the season.

**Q. Coach, first I just want to say I'm always impressed with the job that you do. I usually get one of your games every year. You've had two guys as leaders. I want to ask, the first question is for you, who's your leader going to be this year? You've had two guys in the past in McKinley Wright and Evan Batty. And I've got to be honest, I've been around the Pac-12 for 30 years now, and I've never seen two guys as loved by a school like those two guys were. So who's your leader this year?**

TAD BOYLE: You're looking at him. I think Tristan is a guy who was -- played with Evan, played with McKinley, so did Nique. Nique kind of followed in the footsteps of D'Shawn Schwartz. D'Shawn was a good leader for us as well. Nique comes from his same hometown.

Both these guys have learned from those guys you just talked about, and we've talked about it in our meetings that we have. It's now their time to step up. And leadership, you only find out about leadership is when adversity hits. It's not a matter of if it's going to hit, it's when.

And when we hit it, I'm going to lean on these two guys to get that locker room right and get things going in the right direction. Because that's what you have to have. You have to have players that understand what it takes.

These two guys understand it. They haven't been through it before when things have gotten tough in the past. They've been looking to McKinley or looking to Evan. Now they've got to look in the mirror and turn around and get the locker room right.

But I've got 100 percent confidence in these guys. That's the continuity that I was referring to earlier. It's not just freshmen become sophomores and sophomores become juniors, they've got to be improving, and then they've got to also learn that, when you go from your sophomore year to your junior year, your junior year to senior year, there's certain expectations that come with that as well.

These guys are prepared for it and ready for it.

**Q. One more for you. How proud are you every time I watch the Boston Celtics and see Derrick White out there? How proud are you of him?**

TAD BOYLE: I'm more proud of the person that Derrick White is. I know he's a helluva player. I knew that when we recruited him. I knew that when he played for us, when

he was sitting out and practicing for us. So he's a terrific player.

Certainly there's a lot of pride that goes through our players, through Buff Nation, but I'm more impressed when Derrick comes back to practice. He just had a son. He brings his wife. He's the same guy today that he was when we recruited him, and that can't be said, as you know, for a lot of NBA players.

So I'm more proud of Derrick White the person than Derrick White the player because of who he is and how he carries himself.

**Q. For the players, how much did you know about Grambling? Have you guys heard of Reed and Robinson? I'm from Louisiana. I know Coach Boyle knows. Do you know who Willis Reed is, who Eddie Robinson is? One thing I want to say to you guys, I think it's going to be an eye-opening experience because the Pac-12 schools have so much money, and these HBCUs a lot of times are really, really struggling. When you guys go down there it's going to be an eye-opening experience where you just say, wow, because you may take for granted what you have here in the Pac-12. But once you see the SWAC and how those schools operate, it's really going to be an eye-opening experience. Do you guys have any idea of the history of Grambling at all?**

NIQUE CLIFFORD: I've heard the name Willis Reed. I kind of know him as a basketball player. But I don't know too much about Grambling State itself, and that's why it's such a great opportunity for us to learn more about these type of schools and like the things they experience on a daily compared to what we experience in the Pac-12.

Like you said, it's definitely totally different. And that's why we're so excited to go there and learn about these type of things and just learn their history and the type of players that have come out of these different programs.

I'm definitely looking forward to it, and I know the rest of my teammates are as well.

TRISTAN da SILVA: Yeah, same thing. I'm really excited to learn about it. I'm really willing to learn about it. I don't have a lot of background just because I don't really have an overall college background on U.S. universities like that.

But I'm really excited for it, and I think it's going to be a great experience for us.

TAD BOYLE: I may have to pull out the Willis Reed Game 7 walking out on the Garden floor. If that doesn't inspire

these guys, I don't know what will.

**Q. First of all, I didn't know Willis Reed played at Grambling State, so I'm being educated today as well. Tristan, I just wanted to get your thoughts on your brother, Oscar, who's older than you and played at Stanford. Just your relationship with him and how he's helped you grow and develop as a basketball player.**

TRISTAN da SILVA: I mean, our relationship, he's my brother. I don't really know. We're best friends. He's my older brother. I come to him when I need advice. We've just talked a week ago. He's now back in Barcelona playing with Cory Higgins, a former Buff as well. He's enjoying himself. He's having a great time out there.

We talk regularly, and whenever things get tough or whenever things are not going my way, I always know that he's going to be in my corner. I always know that I can reach out to him, and he's going to give me advice on his four-year trip at Stanford.

He's been through it all from a college experience, I feel like. So it's a great shoulder to lean on. It's a great resource, I guess, to have.

JESSE HOOKER: That's all we have time for for Colorado. Thanks for being here today, and best of luck this season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports