

Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

San Francisco, California, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Mick Cronin

Tyger Campbell

Jaime Jaquez, Jr.

Men's Head Coach



JESSE HOOKER: We're happy to welcome UCLA head coach Mick Cronin and student-athletes Tyger Campbell and Jaime Jaquez Jr. We'll give you the opportunity to make a few remarks, and then we'll turn it over for questions.

MICK CRONIN: It's great to have Tyger and Jaime here with me. Better coach with good players. Somebody told me get horses and ride them. Since I'm scared to do that, I'm just going to do it in the coaching realm.

We've got two horses this year. We're going to ride them. We're excited about the season. We've got five guys on our team that have played the Final Four, but we've got a lot of freshmen as well.

Just excited to get started, trying to get Mac and Will back healthy and get back to full strength. It always makes it nice when you've got two guys that could both win Player of the Year in the league on your team.

Q. I'll start with Jaime. How does it feel to be healthy after all the injuries you had to struggle with last year?

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: Feels pretty good to be healthy, I can't lie. Last year dealing with a lot of injuries, pretty banged up on both ankles, but had a lot of time this off-season to recover and get as healthy as possible, and that's what I'm doing.

Q. Mick, earlier today, Pac-12 commissioner said he hadn't talked to anyone who was in favor of the USC, UCLA move to the Big Ten. I think it's only fair to ask USC and UCLA if they have any response to what George said.

MICK CRONIN: Yeah, look, I was playing golf when that

happened, so that was way above my pay grade.

For me, I'm getting older now. It's my 20th year as a head coach. I'd rather talk about these guys than all that stuff. AD, presidents, commissioners make those moves, so they can talk about it. I'd rather talk about these guys in all due respect.

I think that everybody today should be talking about our players and these kids that are working so hard. It's a year round sport now, as you know. These guys live in the social media world, where they're being critiqued at all times as amateurs, and it's not always pretty.

So I think every media day should be about the players. I got two great ones here with me and a bunch of other ones at home. Happy birthday, Dave Singleton.

TYGER CAMPBELL: Happy birthday, Dave.

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: Happy birthday, Dave.

Q. Jaime, how much of you coming back was this guy sitting right next to you and the chance to do something special together?

MICK CRONIN: Which guy sitting next to him?

Q. The guy in blue.

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: Well, looking at the guy to my left right here, No. 10, we had talked about in the off-season what our decision was going to be. He had opportunities. I had opportunities. Ultimately, we came to the decision that we were going to come back and try to hang banner Number 12 at Pauley Pavilion. We talked about it, and I think we both had a good understanding of what we're trying to accomplish.

Q. I'm going to miss you, Coach. You always make me laugh.

MICK CRONIN: I mean, I'm not retiring.

Q. I know, but I'm not going to be able to ask you

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questions. When Jalen Hill passed, I saw your tweet talking about social media, and it really shook me because I knew him since he was 14. So I'm interested to getting all your thoughts. You have anything you're going to do special this season, a memorial, anything?

MICK CRONIN: I've got to talk to George Hill about that. George and the family's been going through, obviously, I can't imagine. So just been trying -- my thing with communication with George is just -- Jalen's father -- just trying to be supportive to him.

Tyger and I and Jaime were about Jalen on the way here yesterday on the plane. For us, it's surreal because it's not like we saw -- it's not like he was sick. He wasn't on our team anymore, but, look, he's from Southern California. These guys know him well. So it's really still hard for me.

If it's hard for me to believe, and I've been through the passing of people that are close to me, for young people -- like Tyger and him were roommates. It's really like -- it's hard to even process that Jalen has passed away. They definitely will have some sort of remembrance of him.

It's just a horrible, horrible tragedy that he's gone from us so soon.

Q. The Jaime, continuing our conversation from lunch, what would it mean to you to be the next player of Mexican descent to get to the NBA, and, Coach, what do you see in Jaime that will make him succeed at the NBA level?

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: I think that would be a big steppingstone for people in my community, especially the Mexican community, to see a guy like me fulfill a dream I've had since I was a little kid, and just to inspire that next generation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans that want to fulfill their passion, whether it be basketball or anything else.

Just to be that beacon to say that, yeah, you can do it too.

MICK CRONIN: Well, Jaime's got one skill that is all encompassing. Guys in the 6'7" to 6'8" range that are athletic enough, can defend, play hard enough to play at the NBA level. He could have made it this year. He could be playing right now.

Injuries slowed him last year. Jaime is a very unique person where he values the college experience, where today most players are coming to college to get to the NBA. Jaime is extremely mature. It's a credit to his family. That he values the college experience.

He doesn't think about the money aspect -- not that he doesn't want it, but it's more the experience for him. Also, look, in college, Jaime is showing you every year he's scoring more and more points. He was an elite scorer in high school. He's going to score a ton of points this year as most guys are.

He's going to play this position, which will be multiple positions. That's what the league is all about now. Guys 6'7" to 6'9" that can do multiple thing. Hopefully somebody that -- when the day comes next June, he's going to get drafted right away. He's not a young kid who needs development, like a young Peyton Watson. He's going to help a team win right away because he's made UCLA win for three years, and he's going to have the experience to do that.

Q. I have a question for the players. First for Tyger. I feel like the point guard position is the most important in basketball. Tyger, I'd like to hear from you how you define what a great point guard is, what a great point guard does. Then for Jaime, I believe that your sister is now a freshman, and I just want to know what that experience is like to have your sister now on campus with you.

TYGER CAMPBELL: I'd say being a point guard is all about being selfless and being an extension of the Coach on court. I like to be on court relaying Coach's messages and checking on everybody, making sure they're good. Kind of just playing outside of myself and worrying about the guy next to me while still I'm trying to add those things of getting myself going and just try to add on to my game some.

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: Yeah, my sister, hot topic lately. She's been enjoying her time at UCLA so far. I'm just very blessed and able to recognize how rare and how special it is to have a little sister playing basketball, college basketball, at the same time. That doesn't really get to happen very often.

So I'm just really happy that I'm able to acknowledge that and appreciate it.

Q. For Jaime and Tyger, who do you consider your biggest rivals personally, like in the Pac-12? Is it 'Zona because you're battling for top dog? Is it crosstown rival Trojans? The Cal schools? And has that evolved over your years playing for the Bruins?

TYGER CAMPBELL: I'd say it's everybody respectfully. I don't know, I like playing at the McKale Center. What about you, bro?

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: I like playing at Arizona. I think that's one of the most hostile but fun environments to play in.

Q. In college basketball today, a lot of guards want to be combo guards, not necessarily pure point guards. You have one in Tyger. What advantage to have a veteran point guard on court does that give your team?

MICK CRONIN: A huge advantage, but those days are over for him. For him to be selfless, he needs to shoot more now. He's an elite shooter, one of the best in college basketball. His role is dramatically changing.

He's a veteran, so he knows don't turn the ball over. He knows to not upset me in practice. Added on that for him, once we got started this summer, he must hunt shots for the first time in his career. I'm on him. I want him in Steph Curry mode.

So Tyger is the best in the country at taking care of the ball, can run the pick and roll, run your team is out the window. He's become such an elite shooter, that for us to win, he needs to be hunting shots. Am I kind of blowing your theory?

As you know, the game's evolved with the advent of the three-point line. When you have a guard that can shoot it off the bounce, it's such -- it makes him so hard to guard because, for instance, in our scrimmage, he made seven, but down the stretch, because of that, they were guarding him so tight, he was going to the basket and getting fouled repeatedly, and he's elite at that as well.

And on this team, we have other point guards. Amari Bailey is a point guard. Dylan Andrews is a point guard. It's going to help Tyger where he doesn't have to bring it up and he's going to be able to get off the ball some, which makes him happy. He doesn't have to do all the dirty work of bringing it up all the time.

TYGER CAMPBELL: Could you say it again, your question? Kind of like what I said earlier, I'm just an extension of Coach. If Coach needs me to take more shots for our team, I'm going to take more shots. If Coach needs me to play defense, I'm going to do that. I just want to be a team guy, and I'm here to win.

MICK CRONIN: I'd like 30 a game. Since he's going to deliver whatever I ask.

TYGER CAMPBELL: Me too.

Q. Just to piggy-back a little bit off of that, I notice two years ago you shot 25% from three, smaller sample

size, about 70 attempts, went up to 120, 41% and one of the best in the conference. Obviously you've become a sniper on top of all of your other abilities, leadership and whatnot. First of all, just in your own words, what was the biggest difference? Was it more the offense playing through you? Was it just a lot of hard work working on that three-point shot? Then followup question for you, at 5'11" in today's college basketball, we have a lot of rosters 6'3" and above. I was with a team yesterday, their shortest guy is 6'5". Is it becoming more challenging at your size, or is it actually giving you an edge?

TYGER CAMPBELL: To answer your second question, I've always been a smaller guard. I've always had to play with a chip on my shoulder. Just what you said, all the rosters around the country, their point guard is 6'2", 6'3". That's never really bothered me. I've always gone out and tried to play with as much heart as I can, and I've been like that since I was a kid.

What was the first question again?

Q. Increases in percent.

TYGER CAMPBELL: Yeah, that was just in the summer coach was on my back telling me to get in the gym. So I was there four or five times a week and trying to get game ready shots. Just stay in the gym, living there, because it's helped. You've seen the results, and it makes you want to just keep doing it.

Q. I'm a little bit surprised to hear that because for me watching Tyger is really refreshing. You don't see too many true point guards anymore. I'm going to direct this to Jaime. I don't know if it's a result of you guys lost Jules Bernard and Johnny Juzang, two guys that can really score. What do you see as a difference so far this season? Last year it seemed to me Tyger looked to get everybody else involved, and when teams dared him to shoot, he knocked it down, which to me is a true point guard. I'm not so much sold on there isn't really too many true point guards in the game. I don't consider Steph Curry a true point guard. He's a scorer in my opinion. Have you noticed a difference this year with Coach saying he wants Tyger to score more versus last year Bobby Hurley he looked like he was trying to set up everybody else, didn't do his thing?

JAIME JAQUEZ JR.: 100%. Last year we had a different group of guys, guys that could put the ball in the basket. Jules, Johnny were guys that could really shoot the ball at a high clip, and Cody down in the post, we definitely tried to get him involved in offense.

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Now we've got a lot of younger guys. There's definitely a scoring hole to be filled with Johnny and Jules being gone, and Tyger has been stepping up to fill that role. He's been able to shoot at a tremendously high clip. It's incredibly hard to guard him in practice, I can't lie, trying to chase him off screens, coming off pick-and-rolls.

To see him go at everybody offensively really just makes everyone else better. Guys have to defend him. And we're defending, to me, the best point guard in the country every day in practice, and that can only make us as a team that much better.

Q. Mick, kind of echoing that question, replacing a guy like Johnny, is it just by committee? Do you look at it that way? Or is it a certain skill that he has that you're trying to replace?

MICK CRONIN: Look, Johnny was a great college scorer, but we have to -- we've got Amari Bailey coming in with clear NBA talent. Dave Singleton did a super year, which we're going to need Dave to be more productive this year, but he's going to get more opportunity with Johnny gone.

So it's going to be different. Look, these two guys can both win Player of the Year in the league. That's not just because I'm their coach. Both could be first team All-Americans at the end of the year.

I watch them every day. So they're both more than capable of getting, both of them, 30 on any given night. We had a scrimmage, they both almost got 30. One of them did, one of them almost did.

So I'm not that concerned with replacing Johnny's scoring as much as I'm concerned we're going to have to play a lot of young guys. So we've been working hard on defensively getting those guys up to speed defensively and up to speed with how hard you've got to play and compete in college basketball to win, because they have the talent.

JESSE HOOKER: That's all we have time for. Thanks for being here today.

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