

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Cal Bears

Coach Charmin Smith

Mjracle Sheppard

Lulu Twidale

Women's Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the 2025 ACC Tipoff Q&A. I'm happy to have the Cal Golden Bears on stage with me. Starting with head coach Charmin Smith going into her seventh season at the head of the program. We have Lulu Twidale, a junior, and Mjracle Sheppard, also a junior on the stage with us this morning.

You're coming off one of your most successful seasons, especially your first season in the ACC. 25 wins, eight straight weeks of being ranked and, of course, an NCAA berth. How do you build upon that, especially with some new pieces coming in?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, we have seven newcomers. We have a really exciting group, and I think we're all ready to do more. We were excited about making the tournament, but we want to go further and want to do better in the ACC as well.

THE MODERATOR: We know there was a lot of threes, how you liked to play last year. Similar look this year, or will there be some changes?

CHARMIN SMITH: Definitely a different look. It's hard to have both first and second scorers from the three-point line in the ACC, so we've made some changes, but I think we're quicker. I think we have a better defensive team, and our offense looks a little different and our movement.

So I'm excited. It's been a really fun group to coach thus far.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, I'm going to ask this. It's 5:00 a.m. in California right now. Who of your teammates are watching?

LULU TWIDALE: I don't know if any of them are watching. They might replay it back, but I don't know if they're awake.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, you had a huge ACC tournament: 16 points; shot 53% from three; rebounded the ball almost four a game; three assists. What was your focus this offseason to build on that coming into your junior year?

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, I think last year I was very -- most of my points came from the three, so I just think being able to finish at the rim at a more consistent and high level, and also developing my midrange to be a three-level scorer to help benefit my team in the long run.

THE MODERATOR: Mjracle, throughout your career you've been known as that lockdown defender, just that person that makes things happen. What's the goal for you now?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: The goal for me now is to develop my three a lot more and still be as competitive in the lockdown defender on defense.

THE MODERATOR: Follow-up question, because we've talked about your defense. Who has been the most difficult player on the Cal team for you to try to lock down and defend?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Definitely Lulu. We always go head-to-head. Everybody, like, are you all beefing? I'm, like, no, we're just competitive.

THE MODERATOR: What makes her difficult to defend?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Her three-point shot for sure. And then she is also is working on the attacking the hoop, so she's really good on that too.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, I'll flip it over. What makes her such a good defender?

LULU TWIDALE: I mean, she's in your shorts. She wants to steal the ball. I think obviously as soon as you put the ball on the floor, you got to look after it. Otherwise, she's



going to come after it, so...

THE MODERATOR: Charmin, I want to rewind to year one in the ACC. In the NCAA Tournament you told me a story about what you did with your team, and I thought it was such a culture-building moment during ACC play. Coming back from the Louisville-Notre Dame swing, tell us what you decided to do with this team and how you thought it kind of changed the trajectory of ACC play?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, it was a tough trip for us. We wanted to perform better. Any time you lose two in a row, we just felt kind of down. I could tell that the energy wasn't where we needed it to be. I didn't feel like practicing, so I knew they didn't feel like it.

We brought them in and we put up in some paper on the wall and let them dip some balls in paint, and I said, whatever it is that's holding you back, whatever it is that you have that frustration, that disappointment, just chuck it at the wall and get rid of it, because we're moving on. We're moving on from this weekend, and we're going to do some things better moving forward.

We chucked paint at the wall. It's still on the wall in the locker room. Then we sat down and watched the UCF-UCLA game coming on. Did not practice and had popcorn and snacks and just enjoyed one another, and I do think it revitalized us and pushed us forward.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, to me I think especially during a conversation coaches think X and O, X and O, X and O. That said so much to me about Charmin and her feel for you guys. What's it like to play for her.

LULU TWIDALE: I think we all appreciate Coach Charm because she knows when to push us and when to let us relax a little. She's very good at reading people on and off the court, and the way she communicates with people I think really helps them develop, develop for them individually, and also knows what's best for our team. We all trust and buy into what she wants to do.

Q. Is there a certain place or team that you look forward to playing this year? And Coach, is there one coach that's out there that you would just -- that you haven't had a chance to play against that you would want to?

LULU TWIDALE: I think there's a lot of hype around our season opener is in Paris. We get to be in Paris. We get to play Vandy. They're a really good program. That's really exciting for us. It's a great opportunity for us to go showcase what we do.

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: I think for me it's Stanford because I hear all the hype and rivalry around the game, so I'm very excited about that one too.

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, I would echo what Lulu said. Just going to Paris and playing an SEC team, Shea Ralph has done a great job with that program. Having to play Mikayla Blakes, we're really looking forward to that matchup.

THE MODERATOR: With so much success a year ago, Lulu, and we know there's greater goals ahead, what's your message been to your team?

LULU TWIDALE: We have a very new team this year, but my message is to come in every day, compete with one another, commit to the things that you say that you're going to commit to, and hold yourself accountable, and we will be the best that we will be.

THE MODERATOR: Mjracle, both these guys mentioned the Paris trip. Ivan told that you guys took part in a French dinner. There was some escargot on the menu. Talk us through that. Why and how did the team respond to that?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Oh, the team was very excited. Personally I'm a vegetarian, so I'm not a big fan.

THE MODERATOR: Snail was not --

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Yeah. It was fun. We did a French speaking class and learned some French words, so that was very exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Like what?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Bonjour. Allez, it's supposed to mean, let's go.

LULU TWIDALE: I didn't take the French class. I took part in the food.

THE MODERATOR: I appreciate the priorities, Lulu.

LULU TWIDALE: The escargot, it was interesting. It wasn't what I was expecting. We had baguettes. We had chocolate croissants. It was good. It was exciting to have a chef come in and cook for us. Yeah, it was a great experience for all of us.

THE MODERATOR: We know that you are very active in Muay Thai. Am I saying it right? I heard that you had some guests join you this offseason. How did that go, and how did you convince them to come with you?

CHARMIN SMITH: Oh, they didn't have a choice (laughing). We took the team to Jay's Training Grounds and had a good workout with my coach, and I just loved watching them do muay thai. I don't know that they really understand like how much it takes and what the output is.

And then I got to see a lot of their competitiveness and just the physicality. Like, who likes that hand-to-hand combat and who doesn't. It was a lot of fun. I think they had a good time. Did you guys have fun?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Oh, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Did any of them make you concerned that they could take you?

CHARMIN SMITH: Nope. I will say Lola's got hands. Lola's got some hands and Grace McCallop has tenacity. She was getting after it.

THE MODERATOR: What did you think of that experience and what did you think of your coach?

LULU TWIDALE: I'm not really a fighter, but it was still a fun experience. I think being out there and seeing what Charmin does every morning. Like she makes sure she gets up and gets her workout.

I think even I was talking to Puff like mid-workout. I was, like, I know I'm going to be sore tomorrow, because you don't use those body parts that you do, like, for basketball.

I think it was really good to see what Charmin does and how she works out, and I think we all had a really good team.

THE MODERATOR: Mjracle, did you take it to anybody? Did you get taken to?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: No, I was having so much fun at muay thai, and I love that stuff. Also, like, Jay, the owner, he was just telling us, like, it's all smiles. Like nobody is mad or angry. Everybody is just here to have fun and a good time and embracing self-defense.

THE MODERATOR: Charmin, one year now through the ACC. As you think about the coaches in this league, what makes it so special?

CHARMIN SMITH: I see the ACC to me is a really sexy conference, and the teams, like Virginia, North Carolina, Duke, Notre Dame. It just sounds cool.

To add the talent that this league has, and I think that's a testament to the coaches who are doing such a

phenomenal job in recruiting. Coming from the Pac-12 we had great coaches and game preparation and scouts. It's been more of the same here with the ACC.

The first year we were just, like, Oh, cool, we're at Duke. Oh, cool, we're at Notre Dame. Now, you know, we got to settle in and be better (laughing).

I was proud of us finishing one game out of fourth against some really stiff competition.

Q. Kind of going off of that, how would you describe that competition that you had in the first year in the ACC, and what was that transition like going from traveling all over the place? How would you kind of describe that?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, it was just exciting. You know, I was really happy that our administration really worked hard to get us into the ACC. We were stuck there with Stanford kind of hanging out by ourselves for a long time and really happy to be in the ACC.

Everyone is, like, Oh, what about the travel? I said, We're going to get on a plane and go. Our DOBO tested a really good job of solidifying charters that had the big seats. We're lounging back, and they were sleeping. We worked with sleep specialists, nutritionists, all of these things to help us be prepared and be able to perform.

I do think there was just an element of the first time, a lot of fun. So it will be interesting to see how we feel with all of this travel the second time around, but at the end of the day it's the conference we want to be in. We're highly competitive.

The one game, you know, that we did really well off of the charter was the time that the charter was delayed ten hours and we got in at 3:00 a.m. in the morning. That's the best game we played on that Thursday night.

We don't put much thought into it. We prepare and make sure that we've done everything possible to set ourselves up for success, but once it's game time, we're not worried about who had to travel and who didn't.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, this generation is known for their TikTok dances and a lot of other stuff I'm not cool enough to know about. Before you were a competitive break dancer?

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, hip-hop dancer, yes.

THE MODERATOR: See, again, I'm not cool enough to know the difference. What was the go-to move, and do



you still do it?

LULU TWIDALE: My go-to move I would say I like to hit a little dougie here and there. No, I don't competitively dance anymore. I don't even do dance classes anymore. I think it's more day-to-day with my teammates. I enjoy dancing. It's something that I like to do, so...

THE MODERATOR: Do you feel like dancing has helped you on the basketball court?

LULU TWIDALE: I don't think so, no (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Just quick hands, not quick feet?

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, I don't know about that. I was so young when I was doing it. Yeah, I'm pretty sure when I finished, I was about 11 years old. Then I jumped straight into basketball, and that was kind of just my focus.

CHARMIN SMITH: We've seen the videos. She was really cool. We're not going to share the videos, but it was really cool. Coming from someone who can't dance, I loved watching it.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, you got to keep Coach on your good side if she's got the videos. Mjracle, a thrill-seeker. Parasailing, zip lining, mountain coasters, which I don't know what that is, and bungee jumping. How did you get into that, and if you just need a break, what is that activity that you want to go partake in?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Well, just be on like the parasailing, I always told Coach Charmin that it's my way of getting ready to go skydiving. I just enjoy those things during the offseason in my off time. It's just fun to me.

THE MODERATOR: This is the last question for all of you. It's a one-word answer. We'll start with you, Mjracle. When I say "ACC women's basketball," what's the one word that comes to mind?

MJRACLE SHEPPARD: Relentless.

LULU TWIDALE: Greatness.

CHARMIN SMITH: Greatness.

THE MODERATOR: I heard sexy earlier, too. I'll take that. Ladies, thank you, and good luck this season.

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