

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Cal Bears

Coach Mark Madsen

DaiDai Ames

DJ Campbell

Rytis Petraitis

Men's Press Conference

MARK MADSEN: UC Berkeley was recently named the top public university in the country. UC Berkeley has received this distinction for 20 consecutive years. Over 21 of our programs are ranked in the top 5 nationally.

This past week Professor John Clarke was named a Nobel laureate for his work in physics. Just this morning professor Omar Yaghi received a Nobel prize for his work in chemistry. UC Berkeley is a place of high expectations and high success.

It is an honor for us to represent the university. In the world of sports and out West, UC Berkeley is known as Cal. Cal has a long heritage of tremendous basketball players who have gone on to become leaders in sports, leaders in business, and tremendous public service representatives for the country.

It's our goal here with these outstanding players here and the players that are not with us today to restore Cal basketball to the national championship level.

When you look at some of the players that have gone through our program: Jason Kidd, Shareef Abdur-Rahim, Kevin Johnson; the list could go on.

It is an honor to have joined the ACC. We had our first year last year. There were growing pains with travel. It was a year to learn the league, but we are incredibly excited about this year's roster, about what the players have been doing off the court, about what the players have been doing on the court.

In terms of style of play, we will play uptempo, we will share the basketball, and we will pass the ball unselfishly.



I'm incredibly excited about this year's season, and we're open for questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. To look at Chris Bell in bringing him over from Syracuse to the West Coast -- and I know he's a West Coast guy -- what can you say about Chris, what you saw in Chris, and why taking him out of the portal was a good fit to do what you said, restore Cal basketball to what it was?

MARK MADSEN: Chris Bell is an outstanding player. He's an outstanding person. He has such a broad skill set on the court. Everyone knows he can knock down the three, but he finishes at the rim. He can shoot the midrange. He can get in the paint and make his teammates better.

Chris had a dunk in practice probably two or three days ago where basically the practice stopped for a second. His ability to attack the rim with tenacity is there, and he is showing it more and more. Chris is going to be a huge part of our team, and it's great to have him at Cal.

Obviously, you mentioned it, Chris is a West Coast guy. He grew up in the Bay, and it's great to bring him home.

Q. What's the overall message to your players that are in the past, I guess, or even in the upcoming years interested in testing the waters for NIL and the transfer portal versus keep them and build with your culture that you are building at California?

MARK MADSEN: So we're going into year three at Cal. Retention is a challenge for a lot of teams in every sport right now with the current climate, the current environment. So from year one to year two, unfortunately, we were not able to -- I'm saying since we got to Cal. From year one to year two we were not able to retain anyone with starting experience.

Now, from last year to this year we've been able to retain three players with starting experience. DJ Campbell, who is here with us today; Rytis Petraitis, who is here with us today; Lee Dort, who is back on campus right now.

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We have three players that have starting experience that are going to be able to make an impact for us this year. That's huge for us. As we go from this year into next year, we anticipate having even more success with retention across the board.

That's something that kind of we've been working on from the start, and we're having more and more success as time goes on with it.

Q. Last year was your first year, of course, in the ACC. Is there certain places this year you're looking forward to going to that's on your schedule?

MARK MADSEN: Oh, yeah. I mean, you talk about the ACC. This is the preeminent basketball conference in the country. It is. Everyone knows it. I mean, from Duke to North Carolina all the way down, this is a basketball conference, and these are great basketball teams and coaches.

We're going to some outstanding universities this year to play, and equally as important, Duke is coming to Cal; North Carolina is coming to Cal; Notre Dame, Louisville; they're all coming to Cal.

I'll just share this. I mentioned some of our basketball alumni earlier. Every single basketball alum, every single basketball manager alum will be personally invited as a guest of men's basketball, paid for by us, to bring themselves and a guest, not to the low-level games, but to the highest level games that we have this year, to the games that are already close to being sold out.

That's how we feel about our basketball alums at Cal. And again, we talked about heritage and tradition of our basketball program. We wouldn't be here without all those that have gone before us. So we're very excited about that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for DaiDai.

Q. The talk of the transfer portal, you started at Kansas State and then went over to Virginia and now are at Cal. What can you say he about the journey that you've had up to this point and why the right fit for you was to be a Golden Bear?

DAIDAI AMES: It's been an amazing journey. I learned a lot from both coaches from Kansas State and Virginia. Now I'm learning from coaches in Cal. I feel like this is the place I'm supposed to be. Coach trusts me, my teammates are trusting me, so I feel like it's going to be a

good year.

Q. What's been the biggest adjustment that you've made towards your game from the previous past two stops, now under Coach Mark Madsen?

DAIDAI AMES: Really just me being free now, playing free. I didn't have that at my last two schools, but now Coach give everybody, the whole team, a lot of freedom to play. You know, that's really one of the biggest jumps that I made in my game is to play free.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for DJ.

Q. You're from Hampton, Virginia. You started at Western Carolina in and then went out to Cal. Just what can you say to that affect for familiar territory here, but doing it at 5:00 a.m. Cal time?

DJ CAMPBELL: Yeah, I mean, just getting adjusted to the time and how the schedule is over here, it was a lot. I'm an East Coast guy, like you said. West Coast time is a lot different. I try to, like, work out and stuff a little bit earlier from now on. But I mean, just getting adjusted is real well, real nice.

Q. Are what have you seen from Coach to get you to buy into his culture, identity, and what he's trying to build at Cal?

DJ CAMPBELL: Just allowing the players, like DaiDai, piggyback on what he said, freedom, and just building the trust with Coach, whether it's coming in watching film, just talking to him in general. I mean, just building trust with Coach, knowing what we have, bringing in players, bringing in returners also. Just trying to build off that and win.

THE MODERATOR: Last year in the tournament you knocked down a career high ten free-throws in a double overtime win. Here in Charlotte, again, back in March. What is it about free-throws that strikes your eye so well?

DJ CAMPBELL: I'm just a guy that likes getting to the basket, whether it's creating opportunities for me or getting into the line of scoring. That's just my game, first, is to be able to get to the line, create, look for others.

Yeah, I mean, I like the free-throw line. It's the easiest shot in basketball other than a layup, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Rytis. The one thing I noticed in all of the notes about Cal heading into this is there's a great deal of basketball pedigree. It seems like every spot within the program there's a touch



with some really deep history with basketball. Both your parents obviously played hoops. What is it about your childhood growing up with basketball that puts you in this spot today?

RYTIS PETRAITIS: Mainly it's just, like you said, the heritage. Like my parents, I wanted to grow up -- wanted me to grow up playing basketball, even if they admit it or not. I was really close to playing baseball and my parents, you know, they pushed me a little towards basketball. I'm happy they did.

Just seeing both of them succeed. They played in the Pac-12 at Oregon State and just seeing them both succeed and be the players they were, I feel like you can see both types of players in the way I play.

Like, my mom being an efficient rebounder, one of the best rebounders in the Pac-12, and my dad just having that work ethic that I feel like I have out on the court. So yeah.

Q. Rytis, you heard Coach talk about having some returners this season and being able to build off of that, you being one of those returners to this team. What is it about this Cal team, the identity maybe, the pillars, that foundation that you were working to build last year that you can see coming through a little bit more?

RYTIS PETRAITIS: Oh, definitely the ball movement and trying to play fast. I feel like last year we were trying to slow the ball down a little bit and calling a lot of plays, and I feel like we have the ability this year to just move the ball down the court, play fast, not having to call out plays as much, and just be more unpredictable on the offensive end and show that everyone on the court can help the Golden Bears win at some point, so...

THE MODERATOR: Do you have to win a championship in order to call it a successful season?

RYTIS PETRAITIS: Yeah, that's a tough question, but I would say no. Winning a championship isn't always the successful season. I feel like getting better every year is what you call success and then eventually getting to that point.

Of course, we all want to win a championship, and that's what our goal is this year, no doubt about it. We're always going to shoot to the stars, you know, but championships is what makes legacies, and obviously there's been a lot of successful teams in the past years that haven't won championships, but people remember.

Even if we don't win a championship this year, we're going

to be a team that people are going to remember.

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