

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Cal Bears

Coach Charmin Smith

Gisela Maul

Lulu Twidale

Women's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the ACC Tip Off Q&A. I am happy to welcome the Cal Bears to the stage, led by head coach Charmin Smith, Lulu Twidale, and Gisella Maul. Ladies, thank you for being with us.

Charmin, you return four full-time starters from a team that's coming off its third straight winning season and advanced to the quarterfinals of the WBIT.

Can you talk to us about where this team is now with the experience that you have returning, and maybe how and what you have seen that you know this team can elevate and build on last year's success?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, I think returning seven people from last year's roster and four starters has really catapulted us. We're a lot further ahead than we were at this point last year.

Things moved really fast. You know, the drills that we're doing, where we are with our defense, everything is just a lot further ahead than last year, and I think that's going to help us be ready sooner obviously.

So I'm excited about what we can do this year.

THE MODERATOR: Your average margin of defeat a year ago in Quad 1 losses was 8 points a game with three of the losses coming by 4 points or less. What has been the focus during the offseason in these early practices now to win those games this season?

CHARMIN SMITH: You know, it was tough last year. We were in a lot of big games. You know, we had chances, and again, I think the veterans that we have returning will remember that and we'll be better because of it.



I think we just keep gaining experience. And people know our system now. People are more familiar with how we want to play and what we want to do. I think that will get us over the hump in those close games.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, last season you had increases in your points per game, rebounds per game, assists per game, steals per game. I got to ask you, what was the focus this offseason to elevate your game once again?

LULU TWIDALE: This offseason it was consistency. Last season didn't start how I wanted to. It came in conference and at the end of conference, so my goal is just to be really consistent this year and come in ready to go from jump.

THE MODERATOR: Gisella, last year you had a career high in points, rebounds, assists, and steals. Now I know why you were so good last year. While also shooting career highs from the field, three, and free-throw line. Same question to you: What was your area of focus to increase your level of play this season?

GISELLA MAUL: Yeah, I mean, definitely consistency, like Lulu said. I think for me the biggest thing that -- the biggest jump I wanted to make this offseason was, like, my leadership. I just wanted to work on being a more vocal leader and just being there for my team in a more vocal way.

I think for me it was just kind of, like, getting better in the areas that I knew that I needed work on. So for me it was many my off hand. I think the offseason I took that as the opportunity to just, like, in my workouts alone just do everything with my right hand and just, you know, grow in that area. That's where I needed growth.

Q. Can you walk us through your nonconference schedule? It looks like it's going to be tough. How do you prepare for that?

THE MODERATOR: Can I piggyback that and start with your exhibitions that you have as well.

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, so is it next week we play UCLA, defending national champions at home, and then



the week after that we'll go down to USC and play USC there.

You know, part of it is we want to get in front of the Southern California fan base that we're missing not being in the Pac-12. Our fans in that area need to see us, and it's exhibition, so we are getting an opportunity to play two of the top teams.

We're excited about that. We want to know where we are right now. We don't want to wait and find out when we have to go to Notre Dame on December 31st. We want to be ready for ACC play.

So we took the opportunity to challenge ourselves with some competitive exhibition games. Then, you know, the SEC and the ACC, you know, give us Joni Taylor and Texas A&M, so excited about that.

The Chase Center has been an amazing opportunity for us in the Invisalign Classic; getting to play Nebraska this year will be exciting. We're excited to play at the home of the Valkyries.

It's an exciting time for women's basketball in the Bay Area, and we're excited to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: There's one thing to have returning starters, but you have veterans. You have experience. How important is that in the ACC in order to have success?

CHARMIN SMITH: Well, we've seen this before, right? When you think about our first year entering the ACC, we had four starters returning and just added, you know, one spot there.

So I'm hoping we can have a similar result and that we have veterans, people who now know the conference even more, and we want that experience to help us get back to the NCAA Tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Charmin, throughout your playing and coaching career, you have been around premiere women's basketball. In this league now that you've gone through it two seasons, what makes the ACC consistently one of the top leagues in the country?

CHARMIN SMITH: I mean, the talent is just spectacular, right? We consistently have players that are up for National Player of the Year. We have great coaches, and I'm excited to be a part of it. I look forward to the competition.

You know, someone asked us, oh, you start at Notre Dame and Louisville? I said we start at Notre Dame and

Louisville, let's go. Why not embrace it? Really great programs in this conference who have been so successful in postseason play.

You look at what we did in the postseason this past year in the NCAA Tournament. We're, like, okay, we want it to be our turn. We want it to be Cal's turn to have that type of success in March, and that's what we're looking forward to.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, which newcomer -- because we talked a lot about returners -- but which newcomer has impressed you the most and you think will make a big impact on your team this season?

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, I mean, I think they all have made a big impact, but I definitely say Ruby Perkins. She's also from Australia, so it's nice to have another Australian.

But she just has really impressed me. She's a freshman. She's come in, and she's just really coachable. She's really good at just understanding our scheme and how we want to play.

It's just been a really -- like, it's been a really good pleasure just to be able to have her on our team and be able to play with her. Yeah, she's a sponge. She absorbs everything you say. She's very quick to learn. I think, yeah, it's really exciting to have her on the team.

Q. A question for Coach. You have several players on this roster from different countries. How does that global makeup influence the way this group might see the game throughout the season?

CHARMIN SMITH: I think it does impact our style of play. You know, I think we have kind of a European feel to us. Add the Aussies in there, like we have a really unique style that's fun. I think it impacts the locker room too in terms of our culture and just our diversity and our inclusiveness. I think we have a great group of young women.

There's a reason why Berkeley attracts people from around the world. You know, it's just a really special group to be a part of.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to piggyback that a little bit. You continue to give back to the game. WBCA board member, co-chair of the DEI committee and your involvement with the Cal campus and community. How does your servitude and your value system permeate to your players that helps build the culture that you have that represents Berkeley?

CHARMIN SMITH: Yeah, I just think, you know, when you are given opportunities, I do believe you should take the

time and make the effort to give back in ways that are important to you. I try to use my platform to speak out about things that matter, that matter to the young women in my program, that matter to the people in the community around us.

Hopefully that serves as an example for our student-athletes, and I want to support them in whatever it is that they are passionate about and whatever it is that they want to make a difference in outside of just being a basketball player.

THE MODERATOR: Gisella, I'll ask you to piggyback that. You watch Charmin on a daily basis be so impactful and use her voice and her platform. How has that impacted your life? And also, describe what it's like to play are for Charmin.

GISELLA MAUL: Yeah, Charmin is one of those coaches that is just going to be by your side no matter what. I think for me personally having Charmin as a coach, like, when I hit the portal, I knew that the head coach was going to be the most important part for me, because you know, I felt like I wasn't very confident in myself at the time.

When I came in, Charmin did everything in her power to, you know, instill confidence in me and just tell me to just stay ready for the moment and that my time is coming. I think Charmin is an amazing leader, and like I think she's truly one of a kind. When I think about head coaches in college, I don't think that there's many coaches like Charmin.

So she's just been so impactful in all of our lives, but especially mine.

Q. Both players, what has the team done individually and collectively this offseason to grow?

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, I mean, I think we've done a lot of team bonding off the court. For example, we went to the Lair of the Bear for a team retreat. We did a muay thai class together, and we made it a team -- it was a team choice to make sure we have an intentful team hang-out every week.

So we went to escape rooms, we've just done a bunch of different activities off the court to make sure that we're building that connection piece. Because that is really important to all of us because we know at the end of the day when we leave and we're done here at Cal, we're not going to be able to play with these people and maybe even see them as often.

So just making sure we build that connection piece off the

court and then I think it really just translates to the court when you are connected with your teammates.

GISELLA MAUL: Yeah, I think that that part has really impacted our on-the-court performance. I just feel like it's really special when you play with people that you love to be around. I just feel like we're in a really good flow right now, and I feel so connected to the team.

Yeah, I think all of the off-the-court stuff that we dedicated and the time we took into getting to know one another has really impacted our on-the-court performance.

THE MODERATOR: Lulu, most coaches a couple of mantras or sayings that you hear nonstop in practice. What are Charmin's?

LULU TWIDALE: Box out (laughing).

CHARMIN SMITH: Real basic stuff.

LULU TWIDALE: Yeah, it's very basic. It's fundamental stuff. She'll tell us to box out.

THE MODERATOR: The things that you hear in your sleep.

LULU TWIDALE: Come on, you guys. We have to be better.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate the imitation as well.

LULU TWIDALE: Sorry about my accent. My American accent isn't very good.

THE MODERATOR: It's beautiful. Very good.

CHARMIN SMITH: That was your American accent?

LULU TWIDALE: That was my intent.

THE MODERATOR: Gisella, I read that you have a passion for cooking. What's the go-to meal, and do you cook top of your team.

GISELLA MAUL: So I have cooked for a few teammates before. I would love to cook for everybody. Just got to find the time for it, but that definitely is a goal of mine.

I will say I have been making a lot of Thai food recently. I made Pad Krapow. I made green curry, red curry. I have made -- yeah, I've been big on Thai dishes lately. I can make anything, though. I'm so adventurous with cooking. It's like a huge passion of mine.

Yeah, I'm so fortunate to have just the opportunity to just make -- I'll send pictures to my family, and then I have made, like, a lobster roll, and they're just, like, wow, you're in college over here big-time making lobster rolls for yourself and stuff. So, yeah.

CHARMIN SMITH: Tough.

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THE MODERATOR: I wasn't eating lobster rolls in college.

Charmin, it seems like every year Lulu has elevated her game under your tutelage. What has been the key to that success, and what is it about her that makes her so special that she has continued to elevate her game?

CHARMIN SMITH: Well, I think Lu just has a drive that she wants to be great. She wants to do whatever it takes to reach her full potential. I'm extremely proud of her. She's worked very hard. She puts in extra time, and I think, you know, we've surrounded her with the right people to support her in the ways that she needs to be supported. That's with our assistant coaches.

You know, Heidi has put in a lot of time with Lu and worked with her. Then we've also said, hey, we don't have all the answers. You know, Lu has a personal trainer outside of us that she works with that I think has helped her game as well. Whatever they need, we're going to support them in finding that and having those resources.

Credit to her for putting in the time to be great.

THE MODERATOR: We heard a moment ago Gisella talk about how special you were to just building her confidence that, therefore, her game has followed. A lot of times people transfer, and we see that, but not all the time are they able to be built up because they hold on to things. What makes Gisella so special that she not only embraced your tutelage, but she's now excelling under that?

CHARMIN SMITH: I think she's a fighter. She works extremely hard at just, like, battling, you know? It's exemplified in just how she's the one on the team that's always taking charges. She does the dirty work, right, those things that you need.

You know, I think it's showing in how she's been impactful for our team and helped us to win games.

THE MODERATOR: To finish up, I'm going to ask each of you to give me a one-word description of Cal women's basketball. G, we'll start with you.

GISELLA MAUL: Grit.

LULU TWIDALE: Unique.

