

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Tuesday, October 6, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Cal Bears

Coach Mark Madsen

Lee Dort

Jordan Ross

Men's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: You'll notice that Lee Dort and Jordan Ross are with us on stage; Mark Madsen is not with us here in Charlotte. He is on the screen recovering from, Coach, I believe knee surgery, is that right?

MARK MADSEN: Yeah, knee surgery.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for joining us. You have the opportunity to offer an opening statement. Then we'll get to as many questions for you and our students as we can.

MARK MADSEN: Absolutely. Thank you so much for having us here at the media day. We could not be more excited to be in the best basketball conference in the country, in the ACC.

I'm joined here today by Lee Dort and Jordan Ross, two outstanding players, two players that are going to help us win a lot of games this year.

You know, we lost some players. We lost some production, but we were able to really rebuild the roster with some great people.

This was our best year of retention in terms of players we retained. We were able to retain nine players. Could not be more excited about the upcoming season. Open it questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, three seasons at Cal. Just what have you seen beyond wins and losses when it comes to the fruits of your labor so far? How are you seeing that develop?



MARK MADSEN: Well, it's developing extremely well. When you look at the community as a whole here at Cal, when you look at the players that we were able to bring in, we are building this program.

We came into a program that had struggled a little bit in terms of wins, and we've been able to improve the wins every single year that we've been here from 13 in year one to 14 the next year; 22 last year.

We hope to be able to surpass the 22 wins that we had last year and have an even better season this year.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, as a follow-up from that from the podium, six of your nine losses last year were single digits; Three of those being either by two or three points. Do you ruminate on those games more than you do others?

MARK MADSEN: Basketball is a game where the margins are very important. We won some games at the margins; we lost some games at the margins. We look at everything in our postseason analysis, so what we can do better as a staff, how we can teach better, how we can put our players in better positions to succeed. There was a lot of learning that came out of each one of those games that you're mentioning.

The Syracuse game, for example, it was double overtime on the road. You know, a snowy night in Syracuse. It was a tough loss, but we learned so much from that game even that we implemented last season.

That's sports. You have successes, and when you hit the pothole, you learn from it.

Q. Just building on some of the things that you said about the team, as you've built the team, you've outperformed your KenPom rating 25, 25, and 12 spots from of the previous season. Just talk about the style of play that you've implemented over those three years, because it seemed like last year you put an emphasis on a three-point shot. 28.6% of your shots were from three last year. You upped that to I think right around the 35 mark, so that was inside the top 75.



Is that something that you plan on doing going forward with this team, or is that kind of a one-off?

MARK MADSEN: It's a great question. It's a really good question because you've identified a key trend year-over-year. What we really try to do is look at the strengths of our players and really play to our players' strengths.

Last year we had some guys that could really shoot the ball. High volume, high percentage. You name it, we could run guys off screens, various pin-downs. We've got great shooters on this year's team. We also have other facets of the game that you'll see.

We really try to play to our players' strengths. Is three-point shooting an emphasis for us? Absolutely, it is. You'll see other emphasis points crop up as our style of play starts to become known.

Q. Coach, what message would you like to share with your fans heading into this season?

MARK MADSEN: The message I would share is just a message of excitement, and I'll point to Lee Dort, who is a returning player, and then I'll talk about Jordan Ross a little bit.

Lee Dort is a guy who came in here three years ago as a great player, and every year Lee has gotten better. He's worked on his body. You look at his free-throw shooting, which is fantastic now. You look at his footwork in the post.

Lee is someone who exemplifies college basketball. The opportunity to stay in a place, have continuity, and his game has absolutely taken off. Lee is a great leader, and he's a guy that is such a key piece of what we're doing.

Jordan Ross. Jordan Ross has won everywhere he's been going all the way back to high school. Jordan is a guy who sees the court as a point guard. He's someone who has the ear of everyone in the locker room. He shoots it well. He gets into the paint pretty much at will, and he's a guy who is going to help Cal immensely.

So you look at the type of players we're bringing in, and that's the type of growth that we're really trying to show forth and showcase here at Cal.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for the energy and good luck on the recovery.

MARK MADSEN: Thank you so much. Really appreciate it, guys.

THE MODERATOR: We will switch Coach out with Lee.

Questions.

Q. Lee, Coach Madsen had a successful basketball career. What advice has he given you that you have applied to your game or your day-to-day life?

LEE DORT: I think, like, Coach always transfer what he learned from the NBA, trying to like do the same thing as the big men because we play the same position. I mean, like, Coach always want me to do, like, everyday little things, like be like the biggest guy on the team. Be like the one that like do all the whole work and everything else. That's what I would say.

Q. Coach talked about how important college retention was. Why is it important for you into this upcoming season?

LEE DORT: I mean, just being in college and just stay at Cal for like two years like everything we're doing at Cal, like my first year we had 13 wins; second year we had like 22 win last year.

So going into the third year so, like, it's just, like, important to just stay there and just keep improving and just be a better player and better person in general in just the environment and the city and everything else.

So, yeah.

Q. How has the team grown during the offseason both individually and collectively?

LEE DORT: We trying to get better every year. We working on little things. We kind of learn stuff from other games from last year. We're trying to do stuff, like mistakes we made last year, like coaching everybody else, and like me, where I was there seeing other stuff.

We just trying to improve every little thing when we get in that situation we don't make the same mistakes again.

Q. Working with a guy like Jake Wilkins who came in from Georgia, what's that been like in the front court, and just what can you say about the development of you two working together?

LEE DORT: Jake is a good player. Very long, athletic, and shooting the ball really well too.

But working with him, like, he got to start setting my rebounds up, but he's just actually a great rebounder, great



like, defender, like deflections, steals, all this stuff, blocked shots.

But he's actually a great player, so we're going to see him this year.

Q. You made your senior national debut with Haiti, leading your pre-qualifiers in rebounding. What did that mean for you and your family to wear those colors, and what will you bring from that experience back to Berkeley?

LEE DORT: It was very powerful for me to play for my national country and just able to lead from one thing I do best, like rebound the ball. So it was very nice to just learn from that, and it was just like being out there and it was just, like, outside where I'm comfortable with just learning from everybody else.

So take this and bring it to Berkeley, like, which Cal where I'm more comfortable to play, so like where I learn and know all this stuff for two, three years now. It's just, like, bringing like, the pop that I have. Because playing over there was just faster. It's a 24 shot clock like for game time, so like it was just little bit different. Just bring that to Berkeley and then just play, like, high level, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Lee, thank you. We will bring Jordan up. Questions. Coming in with Jake Wilkins from Georgia, what was that like, the conversation of being in the portal? Was it a plan to find each other in the same place again, or just bring me into how you both ended up at Cal?

JORDAN ROSS: Funny thing is Jake was my roommate at Georgia. He's actually my roommate now at Cal. He committed to Cal first and went on his visit and everything. Then when he got back, he was recruiting me pretty heavily to join him, which I ultimately ended up doing.

Q. Jordan, you come in, you was playing with a good guard, with Jeremiah last year, and you are playing with another good guard, another transfer. How is that chemistry going between you and the back court?

JORDAN ROSS: Yeah, I think we got a pretty deep back court this year between Nojus and Coop, who are also two other transfers, and T.T. who was here last year.

So kind of just gelling with them, building the chemistry, because we are new to each other and new to the team. So just gelling together on the court, off the court, and building that chemistry.

THE MODERATOR: In your first two years at St. Mary's you shot 12 three-pointers your freshman year. In your

sophomore year you shot 82 three-pointers. That's 70 shots more. What kind of three-point shooter will you be at California?

JORDAN ROSS: Hopefully we'll shoot more than we did at St. Mary's. But my freshman year I didn't play that much, so that's why the attempts were so low.

THE MODERATOR: It appears that you're the only real new player with the Bears with at least three seasons of collegiate experience. How do you use what you have learned elsewhere to be that leader for this team?

JORDAN ROSS: Yeah, I would say this being my fourth year, my first three I did make the tournament, and I think the best teacher is experience. So just taking those experiences and the things I learned from being able to be make the tournament three years and win some games in there and ultimately just bringing that to Cal and to my teammates and letting them be a sponge and soak up everything that I can teach and then learn as well.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports