

# Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 10, 2024  
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA  
Allegiant Stadium

## Colorado Buffaloes Deion Sanders Press Conference



DEION SANDERS: This is unbelievable. I think we have the best commissioner in football. He's unbelievable. He's absolutely a legend. He's a baller. He's a shot caller, he's a boss, and I love him. Let me give you some points.

Much love to Gus, Coach Malzahn at UCF. Just ran across him. I'm just highlighting a couple of the coaches because they've been so kind, they've been so considerate and so wonderful to me. And he recruited Shedeur out of high school. I remember going there in Auburn, he's been the same, consistent man since.

He's a phenomenal -- Coach Gundy is a darned legend. So being at the Big 12 meetings and getting a chance to meet a multitude of these head coaches that have just welcomed me with open arms, they have been phenomenal. And Joey McGuire, my son Junior -- where are you at, Junior? He played for Coach McGuire in high school. And Joey has been the same consistent, great coach that he's always been. If you're out there, I love you. I appreciate you. You keep on doing what you do, except when we come to play you, I want you to keep on doing your thang. I love you, you're doing wonderful work down there in Texas Tech.

Cincinnati game, sold out. God bless them announcing that. To you all that say we only go in the portal. We signed 17 high school players last year and 13 played.

When we signed a kid out of high school, the expectancy is for him to play. All you kids in high school right now, when we sign you, we want you to play. 17 kids, 13 played.

We played a total of 20 freshmen last season, including seven walk-ons. So if you're a freshman and you walk on, you have an opportunity to play. Academically, 2024, second highest GPA for the football team ever, 2023, highest GPA for the football team ever. That's AP. That means After Prime.

NFL experience on the staff. 16 coaches and staff with NFL experience. 159 seasons of NFL experience, which is unbelievable.

Impact, school application roles 20 percent including 18 percent out of state. Economic impact, it's crazy. I don't even want to get into that. Exposure as well.

Now, let's get to what you want. Let's get to your questions.

**Q. Yesterday, commissioner, several coaches, players, the enthusiasm of having you in the Big 12. Two-part question. When you look at what you've done at Jackson State, first year at Colorado, the accomplishments and the eyes and attention that you've brought, have you taken the moment to sort of sit back and appreciate? I know you gave a lot of love to your players and programs, but have you taken the time to appreciate the worth and what you've brought? Part one. Part two --**

DEION SANDERS: One at a time. I'm 56. You can't do that. One at a time. Give me one at a time.

First of all, thank you. Thank you for just understanding and recognizing and those things. I don't have time to sit back and watch what was done because I'm so busy doing what I do.

So I don't have time, even though my arms can reach back to pat myself on the back, I don't have time for that. You don't like it anyway. Every once in a while I do it because I know you all ain't going to do it. But I don't have time for it, but I appreciate it and I'm thankful for the calling God has on my life, I really am.

Now we can go to part two.

**Q. Part two, with what you've brought to the programs in the historic black colleges and to Colorado, do you feel an obligation with whom you are to perform at a higher level, or coach at a higher level?**

DEION SANDERS: Yes. Yes. I'm judged on a different scale. My wins are totally different than your wins. Your wins, you just judge football, that's why I start out give you education and academics and so forth, I have to give you those things so you understand there's a greater scope.

I can't win nine games and our GPA suffers. Our GPA can't be high and we lose another eight games. We can't not go and grab high school players, and you've got a bunch of guys in the portal, out of the portal getting incarcerated. My wins are different. We have to win in every area. That's the way we're judged.

I'm cool with that. Because we come at it a little different. So the expectation is greater. But it's not just football. It's been like that all my life. I've always had a greater expectation for myself. The expectation you have for me would never outweigh the expectation I have for myself.

Thank you. That's a wonderful question.

**Q. What led you to the hiring of Robert Livingston?**

DEION SANDERS: Oh, my God, just the opportunity. We needed a defensive coordinator. I'm a pro. That's nothing against the college coaches, because we have some phenomenal college coaches, especially in this conference, but I'm a pro.

So I like the relationships and the thought process of a pro. And Coach Livingston was recommended to me by a few pros that I'm well familiar with and I trust, Mike Zimmer being one of them.

And his interview process and his consistency and his thought process and his relatability just placed him well above the other applicants. I'm happy I made the decision.

When we look back on it, first of all, I pray to God that I can keep him because I feel like we're going to kick butt, we're going to win, and he's going to be a head coach in college or pros or whatever he endeavors because he's that good.

So I'm thankful and I'm happy for him, but he's awesome. When I tell you awesome, he is totally awesome. We have another guy on the other side of the ball named Pat Shurmur that's pretty darn good as well. I mean really good. And his compatibility and his relationship with Shedeur is amazing. And what they plan to do this season, I can't wait to see it myself.

**Q. I want to officially welcome you to our amazing city of Las Vegas.**

DEION SANDERS: I don't gamble, though. So you ain't

getting that out of me.

**Q. With respect to legacy and impact, what legacy and/or impact do you hope to have on the world of sports as a player and/or as a coach?**

DEION SANDERS: Both, really. I don't care how you see me, how you look at me. I'm more apt to understand how I see me and how I look at me and how God sees me and how He looks at me.

So really I don't care how you see me. It's never going to be enough. Nothing I do is ever going to be enough.

I'm cool with that. I understand that that is life and that's how life is going to be. But I plan on being a tremendous blessing to as many people I can bless, especially those probably 120 young men that put on this CU helmet and go out and play for our school and our program.

To sum it all up, man, I just want to be known as a great dad. I think I've got three sons here today. And I just want to be a great dad to them. That's it.

**Q. You're opening up with North Dakota State. Tell me what you know about the Bison.**

DEION SANDERS: They're good. They're really darned good. And I'm mad at Rick right now for putting them on the schedule, to open up with them. Like can you give me a layup or something? Those guys are wonderful. Their staff has always been amongst the best. Many people have matriculated from that staff to go to higher levels. Those kids play their butts off. They play tough. They don't make many mistakes.

They're accustomed to winning. They don't give a darned about being at home or on the road. That doesn't faze them whatsoever.

We just can't wait to see it. I know it's a national television game. I believe it's a Thursday night game. Hopefully not too late. But we can't wait to see them. It's going to be a phenomenal game. Phenomenal match-up. But that program is second to none.

**Q. Going into year two, what are some of the things that gave you confidence that this season can end a lot better?**

DEION SANDERS: When I see the offensive line and the way they train, way they work, the way they go about their job. When I see the defensive line coaches and the way they're on their kids and the way they're demanding excellence, and the way these young men are working and



the athletes that they are and the bodies that they have and they developed right now. When I see the receiving corps staying after practice to work with the quarterback, coming over to the quarterbacks, coming over there on off days to work with one another.

When I see the running backs doing the same, led by a former walk-on, Charlie Offerdahl, when I see the special teams, and Mark Vassett is here right now, I think he's a darned pro that doesn't miss and Jace Feely and those guys that they can't wait for their time. They understand special teams mean they're special. When I see those, the secondary, shoot, they get out of bed, want to play man-to-man coverage. I love it. Shilo can't wait to hit somebody. Cam Silmon.

So many of the guys. The change made from safety to linebacker with Trevor. I really think this young man is going to be the next Brian Urlacher. I think he's going to take the transition from safety to linebacker and be dominant.

I see the want and the fire and desire from our young men, and I can't wait until you get the opportunity to see it as well. I'm very optimistic on what we have on our plate this year.

**Q. As the father of three Division I football players, what did you learn during their process as a parent that's helped you formulate your recruiting style as a head coach?**

DEION SANDERS: First and foremost, I've sat in all seats -- the parent's seat, being recruited as the kid, now being the coach. That helps me tremendously when I'm recruiting.

When I'm understanding what the parent is thinking, what the kid is thinking, now what the coach desires to want to know. It's been a tremendous asset for me to understand those facets of this new recruiting age that is impacted tremendously by NILs and collectives.

So I love it. Sometimes I don't like it, but I love it and I love that these kids are being compensated somewhat for what they bring to the table.

I don't want them to put the bag before the game because if you have the game, the bag is going to come. I want them to understand that.

I just don't want to take away from the purity of this wonderful game that we have. College football is phenomenal, man. This conference is phenomenal.

Look at where we are. You've got to be kidding me. I'm a brother from Fort Myers, Florida, and I'm sitting in the darned end zone in Las Vegas talking to the whole darned country about a childish game that I played. Don't you understand how powerful and wonderful it is? I'm so darned thankful to be here. So I try to relay to the young men: This is the moment, and you better maximize it, and let's go get it.

Thank you. Wonderful question.

**Q. With all the media attention surrounding your program, how do you stay focused on the main goal, which is winning games?**

DEION SANDERS: I think ever since I stepped into Florida State in '85 it's been like that for me. This ain't new to me. I'm not new to this. Like we say in the hood, I'm true to this.

So this is new to some of you all and you want us to change. We're not going to change. We're going to try to do things being smart, tough, fast, disciplined, with character. That's what we're relaying to all our young men. But the cameras and the lights, I think I haven't seen one kid here today that said he didn't like that.

He may not like the process, but he likes the package that you wrap him up in and you put him out there. All these kids are excited about the EA Sports game, their scores and levels. They want attention. They want affection. They want love and adoration -- adulation, I'm sorry. Yes. We give you that. But you have to work first so you can understand the consistency thereof is going to take you to where you want to go and retire mom and dad if that's what you please.

**Q. We talked during spring and throughout last season the importance on stopping the run. You get a guy like BJ Green in your defensive line, how is he going to be a leader in achieving that goal?**

DEION SANDERS: BJ Green is already a leader. Do you know that BJ Green played for me when he was five through seven years with T.R.U.T.H. in south Dallas? He's been a part of my life for a long time. They raised him right at Arizona State. For him to come over now, it's phenomenal. His work ethic, the way he approaches and attacks the game is phenomenal.

His want. His desire. His will. I just got finished doing an interview, they said you have two young men projected to be probably be the top five picks, yeah, but we want four in the first round. The only way that's going to happen is that we win and they're dominant.

I think BJ Green could be one of those guys, and I think he will be one of those guys because he wants it that much. Shane, Ryan Beal [phonetic], Amari McNeill. Just to name a few. Anquin, Tofeke [phonetic], Chidozie, TC, that's my dawg from Arkansas. We have some guys inside there that can flat-out do it. Outside we have some guys that can go get the quarterback as well.

We just want to be in the position to allow them to be the best that they can be, and that's one thing that Coach Livingston is doing well. He's not coming in trying to remake everything and reinvent the wheel. He's like let's find out what these guys can do well and let them do what they do, and that's what we're going to do. That's the formula.

I told you guys, that's what we do. That's how we're coming.

**Q. I have a quick question regarding building a winning culture.**

DEION SANDERS: What's that mean? What's a winning culture mean? I want to know what that means because you've got to be a winner to understand winning culture. Everybody wants to know about culture. What is culture?

**Q. To me culture is day in, day out putting in the work.**

DEION SANDERS: Lifestyle.

**Q. So progressing in that general area right there, as far as the winning culture side, last year you guys started off strong. You fizzled out a little bit towards the end of the year, but I remember you still talking about continuing to build that winning culture day in, day out. Do you feel the guys that you brought in this year are going to be able to help you fill those gaps?**

DEION SANDERS: I don't talk about culture that much so that wasn't me. But I do talk about the consistency thereof of the goal and being consistent in whatever you do. So if you have a team that's got to be a little more physically tough, you've got to develop that.

If you've got to be mentally tough, strategically satisfying, from the coaching staff's point of view, you've got to understand that.

But culture, everybody's on this word, this word, and I don't understand this word one bit, and somebody gotta help me understand what that word, "culture," means. An environment, understanding of winning, you want that. I feel like I'm a winner. I know I'm a winner. So whatever I

display, however I go about my job, my work, my business, my personal life, that's of a winner. That's all I know.

I don't know anything else but that. So in due time, in due process, we're going to reach that goal because if we're going to get there -- because I know I'm going to get there. And I'm not going by myself.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports