

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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## Stanford Cardinal Coach Troy Taylor Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: A new era of Stanford Cardinal football. Troy Taylor, welcome back to the Pac-12. I know there's a lot to talk about, but big picture as you look out six weeks away from the opener at Hawaii. Where are you compared to where you hoped you would be at this point?

TROY TAYLOR: I think right where we want to be. We had a great spring, opportunity to get to know our guys, the things they do well, the things we need to improve. Brought in some of our freshmen recruits that have signed, are on campus, a few transfer guys.

Our guys are working their tails off this summer. Spending a lot of time with them. It's been great.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. With the legendary performance that Sac State put on, the guys you managed to get to the NFL, how do you bridge that culture to Stanford and keep the standard of intellectual brutality that's been there for so long? How many guys from Sac State wanted to come you?**

TROY TAYLOR: Okay. In terms of philosophy and system offensively, there's different ways to do it. Stanford had an offensive philosophy that was really successful for them. We're going to be a little bit more up-tempo in terms of offensively. We'll go fast, huddle at times. We're going to run the same thing I did at Sacramento State.

Our system is adaptable, adjustable. Basically it was created at a high school where you get the players you get, you have to adjust to your strengths. That's what you do as a coach, highlight the things they do better, minimize the things they don't do well, then develop them.

I wasn't going to do that in terms of, I don't know, call me old-fashioned, but Sacramento State was really good to me. I just felt like I was going to not take any of the players there. We had some really good players. It's been a pretty

special place. I didn't feel like that was the right move.

Thank you, though, for the question.

**Q. In your opening press conference, you talked about the culture of love. What does it look like now having been there?**

TROY TAYLOR: When you get in front of a team for the first time, you tell them that you're going to build the program with love, you're not sure how 18 to 22-year-olds are going to accept that.

Afterwards I met with every player, took about three days, 15 to sometimes 45 minutes, and they really embraced it. They connected with it. That was a great feeling.

I feel like they bought into it. We're really lucky to be at Stanford. Our players feel that way. We had challenges just like everybody else does. We lead with gratitude and with love. We feel great about where we're at. It's a great conference. It's going to be a great season. But we're all excited. Our guys are working hard.

I get paid to coach football. Our guys get to go to Stanford University and play football. Who has it better than us? We kind of have that feeling around our program and we're enjoying it.

**Q. When college football seems like it might be a different world than the one you can operate in, that's not necessarily 100% accurate, but how have you navigated that within the current structure of the game?**

TROY TAYLOR: It's what drew me to the job. We are going to be the outlier of college football. I'm really comfortable. Some people see us as the underdog. I'm comfortable with that, too.

We are not going to transition our roster, bringing in 30 transfers every year. We're not going to live in that world. I don't want to live in that world. We'll bring in a few transfers. For the most part we're going to do it with high school recruits. We're going to bring 'em in, create an



unbelievable team culture built on love, gratitude, being mindful, being really competitive. We're going to develop those players over four to five years. You're going to see a lot of those same names. We're going to have fun doing it.

It will be a little bit different than all the other schools, but I like that.

**Q. In terms of the program building you did at Sacramento State, obviously Stanford is different in terms of how you recruit, what are the lessons from building up Sac State in the short period of time are you able to translate at Stanford?**

TROY TAYLOR: I think people are people and football is football. When you talk about schematically and all those things, the players are a little bit bigger and faster. Really the same philosophy I used at Folsom High School, I used at Eastern, Sacramento State, Utah, and here at Stanford.

People are still inspired by true human connection, believing in them and finding people that love what they're doing, have fun doing it, being really competitive. Those things transfer across any school that you're at.

Now, I will say that the Stanford student-athlete, they're very driven, very hard on themselves. They're used to being successful in pretty much everything they've done. In a lot of ways my job is to alleviate some anxiety and some stress, let them know it's okay to occasionally fail. That's how you learn, right?

In terms of people, though, they've accepted me, the staff and our philosophy with open arms. It's been great. We've had a lot of fun doing it. I just feel blessed to be around our student-athletes. They're inspirational. They really are. They're thoughtful, intellectually curious and very driven. How can you not like being around those type of people every day?

**Q. You've been in the job for several months now. Could you speak about anything you've learned about the university in general that's maybe different or unexpected compared to what your perceptions were before getting here.**

TROY TAYLOR: I think when you say 'Stanford', and you do this in recruiting, sometimes you can be a little bit blown out of the water or just be intimidated or think it brings a certain presence or mannerisms or whatnot. Then what you find when you get there is what makes Stanford incredible is the people and how kind they are, how they want you to be successful.

Dr. Condoleezza Rice is on campus, the kindness and

intelligence she brings. A guy like Andrew Luck, who just finished up graduate school is on campus. You meet the people that you've kind of admired from a distance, you find out some of their best qualities are kindness, empathy, them wanting you to be successful. That was a very pleasant surprise.

**Q. Especially last month it felt like pretty much every day you were getting a new commit coming in. How have you been so successful in sharing your message and philosophy quickly around the country?**

TROY TAYLOR: Well, I think being authentic and sincere, I think people smell that and authenticity. We have an incredible staff that works really hard and they build connections.

When I hired my staff, it was really about high character, high output, low ego and in it for the right reasons.

Working really hard at it. Honestly, when you have a product like Stanford, it's not easy, but it certainly is a strength. When you can talk with a student-athlete, their family, sincerely tell them this is a life-changing experience if you come to Stanford. Sure you have an opportunity to play in the NFL, I think Stanford has had more draft picks since 2012 than any other school in the Pac-12, but you're going to have a 97% graduation rate and it's going to be life-changing if or even after you play in the NFL. It's not going to be just a life-changing experience, but for some it's going to be a generational life. It's going to change their children's lives and grandchildren's lives.

17, 18-year-old kids, sometimes it's hard to think past the weekend. If they have a chance to saturate and think about it a little bit, if you get the right student-athlete, we feel like it's an easy sell, if it's the right one. The right ones are drawn to Stanford University. You get them on campus, they see how magical the place is, how amazing it is, I don't know how you don't have great recruiting classes, to be honest with you.

**Q. Playing your last four of six games in the final stretch of the season, how important is that going to be for your program to make a push in the Pac-12?**

TROY TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, our philosophy and expectations, we go into every game with the intent and the goal of winning it. Then we move forward. That's what I've always done.

We're really big on being mindful in the sense that we're not going to congratulate ourselves overly or celebrate overly when we win, but in the same sense, if we are to lose a game, we're going to learn from it and move on

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

quickly. That doesn't really change.

We're really about living in the moment, moving forward. Hopefully at the end of the year you get to bowl game, Playoffs, you get to spend more time together, look back and see how you did.

It's really about competing to win every single game you're playing in, being really competitive, then moving on to the next one. That will not change whether it's this year or in six or seven years. That will always be the same for our program.

**Q. You probably have one of the best kickers in the country right now in Joshua Karty. What is it like having him on the roster, what does it bring to the table? How much easier do you sleep at night having a kicker like that?**

TROY TAYLOR: It's an unbelievable weapon. You cross the 50 and you're feeling like you're in field goal range (smiling).

Josh is a really special guy. He's going to play for a really, really long time. One of the smartest players on our team. Exceptionally accurate. Hard-working. He's a true weapon.

We feel lucky to have him. He'll be a big part of our success this year.

**Q. I think about your journey, 20 years ago you were getting introduced as the head coach at Folsom High School. Made some stops along the way. Going hundred miles an hour trying to get this thing where you want it. Have you taken moments or pause to realize, think about where you are, reflect on the fact that you have that S?**

TROY TAYLOR: Thanks for the question. Yeah, it's amazing. It really is. I've enjoyed every moment.

Truth be known, I could have stayed at Folsom High School and loved it. I had a great time. I enjoyed my relationship with players and coaches. It was just one of those things where I felt like I needed new challenge. Could have went up to Eastern Washington, could have been there for 20 years. I kind of enjoyed everywhere I've been.

At Utah, it was fun. Sacramento State, I could have been there forever. Hard to leave that place being my hometown and special people. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world. Maybe Bill Walton is the first luckiest guy in the world, but I'm the second to be able at Stanford, to be able

to do things the right way, to be able to have, I believe, sustained success, be around unbelievable people and student-athletes.

To me it's an amazing ride that I've had, and I feel very fortunate. There's been a lot of people that have played a part in that, a lot of great players, a lot of great coaches, administrators. I feel very blessed.

**Q. A big part of your role will be the quarterback meeting room. Every one of those quarterbacks has found their way to the NFL. A lot of inexperience this year. How do you see it going into training camp?**

TROY TAYLOR: That's a great question. We have four guys really vying for the job. Two of them were there in the spring so we got a chance to see them. Two inexperienced guys that are talented, but getting better with every rep.

What goes into it? For me, the first and most important thing is accuracy. You could have all the other qualities, you could be a great leader, have a strong arm, know the offense better than anybody, but you can't deliver the ball accurately, you're not going to be successful.

Functional athleticism, leadership. All those four guys have those things. Can they consistently do it and move the team, do it under duress and all those things? Some of those things we're not going to find out until we get into real games. My job is to develop them, help them build confidence in the system, themselves, the people around them, then adapt our offense to their talent and what they do well.

I found the more you can have success around the quarterback at different positions, the more consistent you can be, it's going to give them a chance to be successful.

They all have ability. We'll see who emerges.

**Q. Somebody that nobody is talking enough about is David Bailey, the most explosive edge rusher in this league. What do you expect his role to be?**

TROY TAYLOR: David is an explosive athlete, very sharp kid. Works really hard. His ability to bend and get up field and redirect is really exceptional. He's one of the more talented guys in the conference. He's going to be a big part of what we're doing. Good to have guys out on the edge that are difficult to block.

**Q. (Question about coordinators.)**

TROY TAYLOR: Bobby April is a phenomenal defensive

coordinator. He was at Wisconsin, one of the top -- probably for the last 10 years, one of the top 10 defenses in the country. Brought over a couple of his assistants, Ross Kolodziej and Mark D'Onofrio. Bob Gregory is on that staff, who has been in the Pac-12 forever. Paul Williams, a corner coach. Exceptional coaches.

It's an odd structure, the ability to go into an even front. We ask a lot of our guys. They need to be able to check and recognize formations and different things. We have smart guys.

I think it's a system that fits really well with us, the type of players that we get. When Stanford was really good on defense, they were an odd structure with great edge guys, a sophisticated system. This is similar in that respect.

Feel very good with the direction of our defense.

**Q. Spring ball, Bobby April, we use the term 'play red' to describe how aggressive they want to be. The guys that you have here with you today, two terrific leaders in John Humphreys, Tristan Sinclair. Their dads played against each other. What do those two bring? What do you see from them?**

TROY TAYLOR: Both of those guys are incredible people, first and foremost. John was a guy, when we had a number of guys that left in the transfer portal, 17 guys, 16 of them had already graduated, they had an extra year from the COVID year, they lost their coach, David Shaw, an unbelievable coach and man, they had a rough couple of years. Maybe they wanted a different experience.

Although we wanted all those guys to stay, I did get it. John and Tristan were two guys that decided to stay. They're great leaders. In fact, I remember in the midst of having a number of guys, kind of key guys. We had 12 starters that transferred. Seems like every day they were declaring their transfer.

I got a phone call from Tristan. Okay, what's going on here? I pick up the phone, Coach, hey, I want to let you know I'm staying, I'm here, I'm going to help build this with you. I still get chills up my spine, always remember that.

John, similar, decided to stay and be a leader. Not necessarily because of me, but because of Stanford, the university and his teammates. Those guys are exceptional people. I remember those two. John, great instinct around the field, great ball skills. A long guy. Really competitive.

Then Tristan is great instinct, really explosive, great feel for the game. They're both really tough, mentally tough, guys. Two really special players that I think will have a chance to

play for a long time.

**Q. You referenced the transfer portal earlier, a couple guys coming in. How about NIL, the other part of college football? What is Stanford's stance on that?**

TROY TAYLOR: Stanford is always going to be Stanford. The strength of our university is our people, our degree, our culture. But we do have a collective, and it's competitive. It's one of those things that's here to stay in college football.

I always say that you don't come to Stanford for the collective, but we have a powerful alumni. There's things that come with being a Stanford alumni that you can't get anywhere else. We're in Silicon Valley. Most of those start-ups, a lot of them have been created by Stanford people. There are opportunities for our players with internships as well as the collective. Then being a part of and taking a degree from the greatest university in the world.

We feel really competitive in all those areas.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

TROY TAYLOR: Thank you.

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