

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

Friday, July 21, 2023  
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

**California Golden Bears**

**Matthew Cindric**

**Jackson Sirmon**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are back with the Cal student-athletes.

You're a vet of two media days.

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I had to make sure the beard was groomed before I came. Good and presentable.

**Q. Jackson, how is it representing this school, knowing your dad is on the staff, you've known Coach Wilcox forever, and this team, you're trying to have a comeback here?**

JACKSON SIRMON: It's an honor to be here, a great event. A lot more talking than I'm used to. Yeah, it's been great.

**Q. Could you explain your decision in coming back, playing another year. It sounds like it was after the season and you sort of decided another year to help build the culture.**

JACKSON SIRMON: Yeah, my thought process, the first thing I thought of is I'm not in a rush to be done playing college football. I have really enjoyed playing college football. Then I really enjoy the setup at Cal. I think it's a really unique situation. I really enjoy the team. I enjoy the guys in the locker room. I enjoy the culture.

The opportunity to play for your dad is pretty rare. So I want to make the most of that opportunity.

I think as far as my fit in the scheme, I think I fit well in that scheme. I think I learned a ton in one year, developed a ton as a player and as a person in one year. I was excited to come back and do it again.

**Q. You guys lost five games by one score last year. Is that something that is motivational, or how are you**

**handling that?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I think we talked about it for a few years now that we're close. I think we're tired of just being close. We set a culture this off-season that we're going to finish things and do things the hard way, make sure that we win those close games and they go in our favor this year.

Yeah, just setting the culture from the very beginning this winter. I think it's gone well this summer. Now we have to go into camp with the same mentality so these games go our way.

**Q. You guys are sixth-year veterans, you're seeing a lot of new guys being a part of the team. How seamless has that transition been? Does the culture of the team help integrate these guys faster than you typically see?**

JACKSON SIRMON: If you told me in the winter that we were going to have half the roster be new guys, I would have been worried. How it's played out, I think the guys we have new, they've done a fantastic job of buying into the culture. They've all come in and worked their tails off. They're all hard workers and good teammates.

I think that's credit to the coaching staff. I think they chose guys that they knew would fit into the culture that we built at Cal. So it's really been I think as seamless as you can have it for having 50 new guys.

I think fall camp is going to help us gel even more, and I'm excited for it.

**Q. How would you describe the culture at Cal?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: Yeah, I think it's a unique culture. We have a really good locker room of guys who want to be really good on the football field but also want to be good at life. I think breeds competition in everything we do, which is really fun.

Yeah, we just have a bunch of guys who really care about each other. They've come in and, like Jackson said,

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meshing together. It's an opportunity to have 50 new friends, as I say. Coming together the best as possible. The coaches have done a great job of recruiting guys that really fit with that culture.

**Q. We talked to Coach about the Golden Buddies clinic you put on. How did you have that idea?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: Yeah, it was something I'd done in high school, working with that community. I knew if I was going to come back for a sixth year, I had to do something beyond myself. I had a little more time, a little less class. It was really a cool opportunity to work with kids with disabilities, give them a voice. Football can be exclusive at times, so just wanted to make it more inclusive for everybody.

With the Cameron Institute at Cal with student-athlete development, they were huge in helping me put it on. That's why I love Cal, it's more than just football for us.

Had an amazing event last Saturday, super grateful for all the kiddos that came out. Had a great time. Had over 30 volunteers from our team, which was just incredible for college guys to donate three hours of their time. Hopefully we can continue Golden Buddies for years and years to come.

**Q. Any stories pop out for you?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I had a kid say, I don't want to leave. That was maybe the cutest thing a kid has ever said to me. I think he had a good time. I hope most of the kids felt that way.

**Q. That's what you guys said, too.**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I'm never leaving (laughter).

**Q. What is the biggest lesson you've learned in your time at Cal? How does it feel getting one last shot at Stanford?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I think the biggest thing you learn over your years is you can't be what somebody else wants you to be. As a young guy coming in, there's a lot of great leaders on the team, you want to mimic them. Over the years, I've come into myself as who I want to be as a leader, as a person. Hopefully I've achieved being a unique individual, a unique leader on the team.

JACKSON SIRMON: For the second part of that, I'm really happy I'll get another chance to play in the big game. Last year was a fun one, my first one. I was able to learn all the history behind that game. Memorial Stadium was sold out.

It was rocking. It will be fun to see what the big game looks like at a different venue.

Yeah, I mean, that was a really fun game, entertaining, down to the wire. I'm excited to get another one, yeah.

**Q. With the absence now of the Warriors departing the neighborhood, the A's coming to Vegas, Raiders obviously here, do you feel like there's a window of opportunity to regain the city and sell some more season tickets?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: Yeah, for sure. We want to make Cal football the team of the East Bay. We definitely have that opportunity this season, especially coming out with the home opener like Auburn is a really exciting opportunity.

So, yeah, when we win games, people will show up. So our goal is to just win as many games as possible, get that stadium rocking.

**Q. Jackson, you were very humble in the answer about getting another shot at Stanford, didn't mention the play that you had that will go down in Cal football lore. Walk me through what you remember about that play.**

JACKSON SIRMON: Yeah, I remember it being one of the weirdest plays I've ever been a part of. They were in wildcat. The quarterback took the snap, just started running the ball. Daniel Scott wrapped him up, made a great play, forced the ball out. Jeremiah Earby, our freshman corner, picked it up, and he started running down the sidelines. The quarterback made an incredible play.

It really is almost unfortunate for him because he made an incredible effort. Popped the ball back out. I was following Earby because I thought I was going to run with him into the end zone. It popped out in front of me. Picked it up. All I did was not mess it up. I just picked it up and ran, scored.

The whole time I remember thinking, This is going to get called back. There is no way this is actually going to count just because of how weird of a play it was. It was pretty fun.

**Q. That was your first touchdown since...**

JACKSON SIRMON: Freshman year of high school. We talked about this yesterday. My high school coach, I played tight end in high school. He always had a joke that I was allergic to the end zone. I got tackled on the 1 line a few times in high school. He was the first person I texted after the game to let him know I scored a touchdown.

**Q. We talked about close games, not being on the winning side of those. Specifically what are you doing? What is the team talking about?**

MATTHEW CINDRIC: I think a big thing we're doing right now is our conditioning. Our coach calls it four quarters. You have to be mentally locked in all four quarters.

They're strict on us. If we're not finishing through the line, with the team counted off, they'll send it back. Being more disciplined, things like that. You never know when one rep is going to matter in the game.

Just as many player-run practices as we can have, as much team dinners as we can have, to make sure when we're ready, those moments come, we're locked in and can trust the guy next to us.

**Q. What have you noticed about the offense, new quarterback in Sam Jackson presumably, style, your takes on that side of the ball?**

JACKSON SIRMON: Yeah, just from a defensive perspective, it's completely different. It really changes how you play defense, how you're going to play third down different. They do a good job of running problem plays. They make sure to put at least one defender in conflict at any play. You never know when you're going to be that defender. It keeps you on your toes.

With the quarterback that can run the ball, that adds a whole 'nother layer of difficulty to trying to stop it. It seems like -- I think Matthew can talk more to this, but it seems like they picked it up well. The offensive staff has done a good job installing it. It was challenging right out of the gate.

MATTHEW CINDRIC: It's been fun. Coach Spavital came in, a lot of energy. All of us remember watching Davis Webb and the boys back then tearing it up. Yeah, we were real excited to get into it. It's just fun to play fast, fearless. We do what we do and we do it well.

As an O-line, I can really speak to just the fact that we can play open and free. He lets us play to our strengths, which is really important.

**Q. You get to go back to Seattle, where you started your collegiate career. Have you thought much about what that emotion is going to be like?**

JACKSON SIRMON: I'm not typically a super emotional guy. I'm sure it will feel a little different than every other game. Every game is important. Every game, you got to

take it really serious. When you look at the schedule, there's a couple logos that stick out a little more than others.

It will be special. It will be interesting. I've had a lot of practices in that stadium, played a lot of games in that stadium. It's a cool venue. They do a good job. The fans, they get it loud. I'm excited to go back. It will be a fun game.

**Q. When you played Cal, when you were on the other side, you made the game-stopping play, called your dad afterwards. That conversation didn't last too long?**

JACKSON SIRMON: Yeah, before every Cal-U-Dub game, you'd meet before the game, Hey, good luck. Yeah, you too, call good plays, or something, you make tackles. After the game, one of us is always bummed out. The conversations are pretty short.

Yeah, I was in on that last play, the last year I was at U-Dub. I remember being excited. I went up to my dad after the game, Dad, I think I might have made that play.

He was like, Oh, good job. He was just super upset about losing the game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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