

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Colorado Buffaloes Defensive Coordinator Charles Kelly

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Charles Kelly, the defensive coordinator. Have you talked to Coach Prime? How did surgery go? How were his spirits?

CHARLES KELLY: We've texted a couple times. I've checked with the people around him. He's doing a lot better. I know his number one thing is to be able to get back so he can lead these players in the fall. He asked me to do this. This was a big honor for me.

We're here, but he's doing great. You can bet once fall camp gets here, he'll be ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously Travis Hunter is expected to play both ways this year. How do you envision that playing out week to week?

CHARLES KELLY: First of all, there are very few players that have the ability to do what Travis can do. Coach Prime has a solid plan on what he wants to do with him on both sides of the ball. Coach has made it very clear that you got to master one side before you can start playing another.

I thought Coach Mathis and Coach Prime did an incredible job with Travis last year at Jackson State. When you talk to this young man about playing corner, he understands how to play the game, he understands the technique, he knows what we're doing on defense.

What we did in the spring was we let him play more offense because he needed to develop more as a wide receiver when it comes to route running, those kind of things.

It will be one of those situations where Coach will make sure that he has a plan going into the game how we're



going to use him. I can tell you this: If a guy can put points on the scoreboard, he's going to play for us.

Q. When did you learn that Coach Prime was going to be having this procedure, you're going to be standing in? Have you ever done the amount of media that you have had to do today?

CHARLES KELLY: I found out, I guess, just a few days ago that wasn't going to be able to make it. He asked me if I would do it. I said I'd be honored to do it.

We have a lot of people on our staff that are capable of being here. We have a great coaching staff, a great support team, not only just on-the-field coaches, but everybody we have in the organization, I think Coach has put an incredible group together.

It's been good to be here. I've been able to see these, first of all, great players that are in this conference, and also the great coaches that are here. I have a ton of respect for the coaches in this conference, what they've accomplished. I've got a ton of respect for the players that are here.

It's a big challenge for us. I'm proud of our players, of what our guys have done since they've been here. Travis and Shedeur, they've shown a lot of class. We just want to represent the University of Colorado. We want to represent our fans, represent our administration, the whole Buff Nation.

Q. Obviously it's a brand-new roster from last season. One of the holdovers is in your room with Trevor Woods at safety. What impressed you so much with him that he was not only able to earn a number but running with the first team defense?

CHARLES KELLY: I think one of the things, you ask about Trevor, first of all, Trevor bought into everything that we were trying to accomplish as a team. It was very obvious. He tried to buy into what we were teaching.

He believes in what Coach Prime -- the vision that Coach Prime has set for the program. That's what we're looking for as far as players.

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I think he really improved in what we were asking him to do. He's a very conscientious young man. He's one of those guys that asks a lot of questions. He can adjust. He can process the game very well.

I'm excited. He's worked very hard this summer, along with the entire group. I mean, our whole defense, that a lot of the guys that have been new, I've been very impressed with the way those guys have worked.

We have a lot of new guys in the secondary. I've been very impressed with the way they've worked. Our entire team has worked very hard. That's a tribute to all of our coaches, our support staff, and all of the players for the effort they put into it.

Q. From a defensive perspective, when you watch your quarterback like Shedeur Sanders play, how does it make it difficult for your secondary?

CHARLES KELLY: First of all, the quarterbacks in this league are just absolutely incredible. It's very impressive group. Might I say I'm pretty proud of our quarterback also. I think Shedeur has done some incredible things in his career. I'm anxious to watch what he can do, some of the numbers that he's put up.

But to your question, I mean, every quarterback in this conference is different. When you watch them play, they have a unique skill set that is a little bit different from week to week. That puts a challenge on us calling the defense or going into a game with a game plan. We have to be a little bit strategic on how we control each of these guys a little bit different.

The one thing in today's football that you have to do, you have to be able to affect the quarterback. You don't necessarily have to sack him all the time, but you have to affect the quarterback. You have to be able to get him off the spot.

The thing that I see in this conference, a lot of these guys do well, even when you get them off of their spot, they can move, they can buy time in the pocket, and they use their eyes downfield, and they're very accurate downfield.

Watching these guys, that's what I see. It's a big challenge for us every week.

Q. This whole team, but your defense especially, is loaded with guys that came from a lower level or Power Five and they weren't playing a whole lot. A lot of hunger to prove themselves. When you have an entire group like that, how much can that help you

build a defense?

CHARLES KELLY: Well, you're right. We do have guys that are coming from different conferences. But the one thing we have is we've gotten a lot of guys that are coming in that have played a lot of football where they've been. They've been in games. They've been in big games.

People ask about playing at the FCS level, a guy moving up. I think if you look at college football over the last few years since of transfer portal has been in play, there have been a lot of guys that have made that jump from the FCS level to Division I, Power Five, and they've had good careers.

The NFL, they don't care where you play at. They want to evaluate and see how you play, and can you play good, can you be consistent.

Yeah, I'm sure a lot of those guys want to be able to prove that, hey, I'm worthy to be at this level. That is important. But I think what our players need to understand is, What can I do every single day to make myself a better player, go through the process of becoming that player, then you're going to get the results that you want.

The guys that have been in other conferences that are coming, they'll bring some experience to our team that we need. We welcome that. We're looking forward to it. Now we have to make sure everybody is on the same page, going in the same direction.

Q. We've all season what a master marketer that Coach Prime is. There is an old saying in business: Hire slow, fire fast. I don't think anybody in this room has seen a roster turn over so dramatically as it did in the off-season. Is there any sense as an assistant coach or within the staff that nobody's job is safe, there's high expectations for you as a staff member to toe the rope, get your job done, otherwise you could be gone? Is there a sense of urgency that this Colorado program has to win right away?

CHARLES KELLY: There's a sense of urgency. In fact, I can tell you nobody outside is going to put any more pressure on us than we're going to put on ourselves.

Coach Prime made it very clear his vision from the beginning. That's one thing. One of the things that I respect most about him is he tells the truth. He made it very clear what his vision for our program was. As a leader, what you do is you make sure everybody in the organization understands your vision.

We all understand that vision. It's not necessarily fear for



our jobs; it's just this is our vision for where we want to go. We want to do it now.

We've taken criticism. That's fine. People have their opinion to say what they want to. But we did within what the rules allow for us to be able to create the best roster possible for the University of Colorado. We don't apologize for that.

So what our job is now is to make sure we coach and we develop and we bring these players along. Every day when you're in college coaching, you do three things: you evaluate, you recruit, and you develop. You do that on a daily basis.

Coach does that. In organization, our team, with our staff, he's evaluating every day. If he can make something better, he's going to make it better. Again, not fear for our job necessarily that we have a sense of urgency, it's just a sense of urgency that, hey, this is what we got to do to bring Colorado football back to where our fans deserve it.

Q. What makes Shedeur such a special quarterback in terms of coming from Jackson State?

CHARLES KELLY: First of all, I love this question because I love Shedeur and what he brings to the table as a quarterback. I've been very fortunate to be on some teams with some very good quarterbacks. They all have some really good characteristics.

The first thing is Shedeur is very smart, all right? He understands the game. He understands what people are giving him.

One of the most important things that a quarterback can do is to make good decisions. He makes good decisions. We go against him in practice, and I watch him. He has a strong arm. He's very accurate. What I call hand talent, the guy has hand talent, very accurate with the football. He's got all of those things. He's got the traits that make him a great quarterback.

Look at his numbers. Look at what he's accomplished. Look at his completion percentage. Look at how many yards he's thrown for. Look at how many games he's won. I mean, one of the most important statistics there is for a quarterback is how many games you help your team win. When you look at his numbers, that's pretty impressive.

Now, in his defense, he can't help who he was playing against. It's like when we recruit a player out of high school, there may be a player playing at a higher classification, then there's a player playing in a little bit lower classification. Well, this player is dominating this

lower classification, what makes him not relevant to play at our level. He can't help who he's playing against.

Production is what you look for. I think Shedeur has all of the attributes to be a productive quarterback in any level. I've known him since he was a freshman in high school. I've watched him develop. We recruited him at Alabama. I've been very impressed with what I've seen.

Q. Ranked at 11th in the pre-season media poll. What was your reaction of that? From looking from the outside, could you understand where maybe the media is coming from in putting the Buffs at 11?

CHARLES KELLY: If we all went off predictions, we wouldn't kick the ball off or play the game. I don't think any of our coaches, any of our players -- I'm sure they'll use that as a motivation tool to want to play better.

But listen, what we're focused on is being the best football team we can possibly be. That has nothing to do with an outcome of a game, where you're picked or where you're expected to place. How we work or develop as a team, how we come together as a team, that's what's going to determine whether we win or not. It will be all about us. It won't be about anybody else or anybody's prediction.

It's fun for the fans, fun for everybody to see those things. At the end of the day, it's going to be about how you produce and execute on Saturdays. That's what we've got to do.

Q. You come from Alabama, Nick Saban. Are there similarities between Saban and Sanders?

CHARLES KELLY: Absolutely. First of all, let me say this. Working for Coach Saban was great. It was an honor. Coaching for him, you see things, you look at things different than maybe you did before. He's influenced so many coaches across this country. A lot of these guys that are head coaches right now, they wouldn't be where they were at unless it was for Coach Saban.

That being said, you ask the similarities. People ask me that all the time. There are a lot more similarities about Coach Saban and Coach Prime than there are differences. When I say that, I always say this first of all. First of all, they're very good men, right? Very good men. They have conviction. When they believe in something, they fight for it, all right? That's a sign of a good person.

They tell you the truth. They tell you what is the truth, not what you want to hear, but what you need to hear. To me they're very similar in that aspect.

The other thing is they have a way of setting a standard. They're not going to deviate off that standard. That standard is the standard. They're not going to come off of it. Everybody that works with them is going to be the same way.

When the standard is the standard, understand you're a leader, you bring people to that standard, that's how you elevate your program. Those are the similarities I see between Coach and Coach Prime.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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