

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach DeShaun Foster

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach Foster, welcome to the Big Ten. We'll begin with your opening statement.

DeSHAUN FOSTER: I'm happy to be here, glad to be a part of this great conference. Finally putting two great emblems together, UCLA and the Big Ten.

We're a school that's won, what, 123 championships, so this fits, us being right in this conference.

Football-wise, we're just excited. I'm sure you guys don't know too much about UCLA, our football program, but we're in L.A. It's us and USC.

I'm just basically excited really. That's it. Any questions?

Q. You were one of the premier running backs coaches in all of college football before taking the head job. I was wondering if you could talk about your two running backs within the room returning, T.J. Harden and Keegan Jones, and talk about the new transfer portal running back you guys acquired, Jalen Berger from Michigan State, just a day ago.

DeSHAUN FOSTER: I'm really excited about my running back room. We have T.J. Harden, Keegan Jones coming back. T.J. is a bigger power back, going into his junior year, played a lot as a freshman. Really came out of his shell last season.

Keegan was used as a utility player last season, but he played running back leading up to that. He's going back to running back this season as well. So I'm excited for that. Explosive kid. When he gets the ball in his hand, you can really see a difference in his speed and just how he plays the game.

Then we're just excited to add depth with another player that's been in the Big Ten. He's been at two other schools, and we're just excited to have Jalen in our program and get him up to speed once he gets into training camp.

Q. How important was it for you to get a guy like Eric

Bieniemy on staff your first year?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: That was huge. Being a first-year head coach, I needed to make sure that I somebody that I didn't have to micromanage.

Having Eric Bieniemy, that was perfect for me because he's an established offensive coordinator, and just the type of experiences and all of the knowledge that he has, I can lean on him and really use that.

Q. How does it feel -- obviously UCLA, one of the biggest institutions in the country and one of the few Black head coaches around the country. How does that feel, being from L.A. and holding down that legacy? And how do you feel like this team has kind of forged its identity under you since that bowl game win and everything that's happened since?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: The players, they've responded to me pretty well. I didn't have too many guys hit the portal. I think I had three. They're taking on the challenges. They're doing what you would want players to do with a first-time head coach.

Then just me being a Black head coach in L.A., I'm just excited, especially just being at my alma mater to coach. You really don't know if those things are possible or attainable just being a player. So I'm just glad that I'm blessed to be in this position, and I'm excited.

Q. How much are you guys devoting to preparing for the travel schedule, Hawaii, a couple of East Coast trips, you've got LSU. I don't know if there's a schedule that you had in the NFL that was like that or if you've seen something like that at the college level.

DeSHAUN FOSTER: NFL, you travel, so it's the same thing.

The first two that you said, LSU and Hawaii, we won't be in school for those first two games, so those aren't too bad with the travel. But Penn State and Rutgers will be during the school year.



You know, it's part of the game. If you're going to play big-time ball, you're going to have to travel. You're going to have to go to new stadiums and hostile environments. So I think we're looking forward to that.

Q. As a player at UCLA, you did play against Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio State. What are some of your memories from those games? Do you use them, even though it's been a long time, with your players now?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: Yeah, I try to just give them examples of certain situations. They don't really want to hear about my playing days too much, so I don't get into that often.

Yeah, I beat Michigan, Ohio State, played Wisconsin. We've played a lot of Big Ten teams back then.

Q. Your first Big Ten road matchup is in Happy Valley at Beaver Stadium. It's a team that UCLA hasn't played since 1968, so it feels like it kind of typifies the freshness of what this might represent in 2024. Looking ahead to that a little bit -- I know coaches don't want to look ahead, but going to a venue that's going to hold 105,000, 107,000 people, a place that UCLA hasn't ventured to with any frequency, how much does that kind of get you excited when you think about this new era of UCLA football?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: That's why we're excited for the Big Ten, just getting opportunities to play in a lot of stadiums that you usually wouldn't get an opportunity to. So I know our players are excited to do that.

Once we get in that week, that's when we'll really lock in. Until then, we're just excited to be in the Big Ten.

Q. You took over an UCLA program that had Chip Kelly leave, D'Anton Lynn went across town. You had the transfer portal that can be unforgiving at times. What have you done to sell the UCLA program for the vision that you want it to be?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: I've really just opened it up. I wanted people just to see what UCLA has to offer. I'm not really a car salesman, so it was more just come out here and see what we're about, see if you can feel the energy, and see if you want to be a part of that. It's been going well so far.

Q. I'm curious, like philosophy as a head coach, what is it? Can you enlighten us a little bit on the ideology of your program with you now leading it?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: Three things you will see with my football team is discipline, respect, and enthusiasm. Those are my pillars. No matter what, you should be able to see that, win, lose, or draw.

You see my guys in the classroom, you should see that. You see them in the dorms, you should see that. Anywhere, you should see discipline, respect, and enthusiasm out of my football players.

I think, if we do that and we're able to present that every game, the outcome will come out in our favor.

Q. First of all, congratulations on getting the job. How important was it for you to instill a culture -- a lot of the players talk about the energy, talking about just having that balance between the work and the fun in order to compete week in and week out to achieve that ultimate goal that you're looking to achieve by season's end.

DeSHAUN FOSTER: I just wanted to play football at a certain level and a certain type. I played football with high energy, so I wanted my guys to do the same thing. I felt that in some situations we just didn't bring that energy. That's why I was making sure that we did that every day in the spring.

It's carrying over into summer training and everything, and I'm just excited to see if we can bring it back in training camp.

Q. Chip ran a lot of inside-outside zone. Do you have any other run concepts you might implement from a manpower encounter? Or is it going to be more of a heavy rush offense?

DeSHAUN FOSTER: We'll probably do all of that, most likely.

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