



**2018 Cheez-It Bowl
Cal Media Day
Quotes for Coach Ashtyn Davis,
Patrick Laird, Addison Ooms,
Evan Weaver, Jordan Kunaszyk**



December 24, 2018

Q. You talk about Jalen [Reagor]. What jumps out on film about him? Do you kind of embrace that matchup against one of the top receivers in the Big 12?

ASHTYN DAVIS: We look forward to that. The amount of volume that he gets, we know they like to get him the ball because he's a talented dude. It's something that we definitely look forward to.

Q. Is it something, too, where you always have to kind of keep an eye on him because he's so shifty?

ASHTYN DAVIS: Definitely. Pay attention to where he lines up, how he lines up, splits, things like. Any type of tip we can get on what they're going to do, we've been looking at. Still trying to study and make sure we've got everything down.

Q. For you all, do you kind of like -- you're the Number 16 defense, TCU is 26. It is probably going to come down to the defense. Does that excite you?

ASHTYN DAVIS: Oh, yeah, big time. I think that we perform well under pressure. It is something that we've kind of embraced this year and gotten a lot better with. Yeah, we definitely look forward to it.

Q. For this program, it was a rebuild. The rebuild with Coach [Justin] Wilcox has kind of skyward, gone up real quick. What has it been with him that has been able to help you guys get to a bowl game in the second year?

ASHTYN DAVIS: Just the culture. We built a really strong culture. We're still building a really strong culture inside of football and out, just everyday life. I think that that's translated into good football and holding guys accountable. We can depend on anyone out there. I think that's been all of the difference.

Q. Describe Coach Wilcox as a coach.

ASHTYN DAVIS: He's really intense, but he's definitely understanding and reasonable. But he expects us to win and play at a high level. So he's going to hold us accountable. When we're not doing things the right way or up to standard, he's going to call us out on it. It's propelled us to a much better season this year.

Q. Do you have a play that stands out that as "your play"?



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ASHTYN DAVIS: Not yet. I mean, the play that stands out to me in my head is a dropped interception against Washington, which isn't exactly a good play. But, yeah, nothing crazy stands out to me.

Q. Can you talk about the reading program.

PATRICK LAIRD: Thought of the idea in January, February. Kind of aligned with the touchdown celebration with Cal fans knew me as. And I was going into my senior season and focusing all on football. You can only work out a couple of hours a day. I'm going to have all of this extra time.

So I thought of this reading challenge. I pitched to Cal athletics, and they got on board. And I started to plan it and it was a huge success. Hopefully we will continue the program for years to come.

Q. I know that you started the reading program. What sort of inspired you to start that up?

PATRICK LAIRD: I had parents and older siblings to look up to that taught me that education was important, reading was cool. I always had that. I realized not all kids have that. After my 2007 season, I realized I had the opportunity -- became the starter and I had kids looking up to me. Cal fans discovered my passion for reading. Cal Athletics got on board.

Q. You said that your family, your parents and siblings, that they inspired you. Were they teachers?

PATRICK LAIRD: No, they weren't. Both of my parents were educated. Then my older siblings always did well in school. My oldest sister was a lawyer. She was always reading. She was kind of like my intellectual hero. So I always looked up to her and saw her reading all of the time.

I just thought it was cool growing up. I realized it was a lucky situation for me. And that's one of the motivations, was to teach kids, inspire them, and just kind of pass on the knowledge and share the passion.

Q. How many kids signed up for the program?

PATRICK LAIRD: We had about 3,500 kids sign up.



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Q. Did all 3500 finish it?

PATRICK LAIRD: We gave out tickets for the first game. We had about 1,000 kids show up and we gave out about 3,000 free tickets because of the challenge. I know a lot more kids finished the challenge that weren't able to make it because I received a lot of messages and emails from parents. About 1,000 kids completed the challenge and showed up to the first game.

Q. How did you help those kids out who weren't able to make the trip?

PATRICK LAIRD: I was in correspondence with a lot of the families. I set up a website for the challenge, and there's a contact page on there. So that was just a great way for parents to reach out and for kids to reach out and say, "Hey, if I complete your challenge, we're not able to make it to the game." We would respond, "Thank you for completing it. Hope you continue to read throughout the school year. And if you ever make it another game, let me know. We can figure out a time to meet." Some of the kids that weren't able to make it the first game, we were able to meet.

Q. How happy were you to hear that Cal was interested in this program, wanted to help out and give you some of the tickets?

PATRICK LAIRD: I thought it was great. There's a lot of great people that work within the Cal Athletic Department. I was working with communications, ticket sales, compliance, the whole gamut. And they're all on board, and they really loved what I was doing, so it made my job a lot easier.

I planned the whole thing and did a lot of the communication. They helped with promotion, and it kind of aligns with Berkeley and Cal Athletics. We are an academic institution. A lot of these people were really happy to help and push something that everyone was on board with.

Q. Obviously, you being a starter on your team, you had a platform that can branch out to other people. How important was it? Did that kind of help inspire you, LeBron James, these guys standing up, helping people? How much did that inspire you to make this decision?

PATRICK LAIRD: It was actually the kids themselves that was the biggest inspiration. There's this game in the 2017 season, I was starting for maybe more than half the season, and during warm-ups before a game, this kid, this dad comes up to me and says, "Hey, will you meet my son?" I turned and the son is standing there wearing a Number 28 jersey.



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It was in that moment, I'm not this walk-on special teams player; I'm the starting running back at Cal, this unique opportunity I thought I had. And from there, I was like, I have an opportunity to do something, and I want to do it.

Q. (Question regarding Coach Justin Wilcox.)

ADDISON OOMS: Nutrition is one of his main things. So when we get on the field, we don't have any excuse not to perform to the best of our ability.

And another thing that he's done is he created a culture of accountability. Everyone is held accountable. If you mess up, you can be called out. And you have to take it because this team is a brotherhood. And if you're hurting that brotherhood, your brother that you love will call you out and you will be able to take that, consume it, and know you messed up.

When before, if you called someone out, you know, they don't like it. They don't take that well. And so the culture is incredibly different from when I was here before. I'm so excited for Cal's future because of that.

Q. Tell me about -- you guys are an Under Armour team now. Under Armour, they threw a bunch of money out there. Talk about how Under Armour has kind of even changed maybe the athletic culture at Cal. How has it changed the athletic culture?

ADDISON OOMS: I mean, I think it's definitely helped a lot. They throw gear at us, they kind of get you -- which gets you more excited to train, to play. And if there's anything that we need, I mean, they hook us up. It's awesome.

Q. Being a center -- doesn't get a lot of hoorahs for being a center. But do you have, like, a play that you've made on the line or a block where you just went --

ADDISON OOMS: Yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely.

Q. Who was it against?

ADDISON OOMS: I had one against Stanford. That was awesome. That was really fun. There's a good amount. But I think my all-time favorite block I had was against Washington State last year. And they do a lot of slants and stuff, so I worked back into the guy, give my buddy some help, go up to the linebacker and, like, I put him on his back, and he's getting up, like, dizzy.



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Q. You kept doing what you're doing?

ADDISON OOMS: Get back to work. You know? That's what we're about. I did my job.

Q. Now you look at TCU on film. What concerns you?

ADDISON OOMS: Their movement. They play very laterally, try to confuse you. And so it is going to be big on -- big on a team, what their linebackers or safeties will give away. But they do a good job disguising stuff, so it's going to be -- it's going to be critical that we as an offensive line are on staying on the same page at all times.

Q. What was your favorite tackle this year?

EVAN WEAVER: UCLA. The guy tried to hurdle. I think it was Ashtyn Davis who tried to hurdle, and then I just came in and hit him pretty hard. That was kind of fun.

Q. What do you think of the photo or the backdrop? Do you like that photo?

EVAN WEAVER: Oh, yeah. I think that was the BYU game? Yeah, that's pretty sweet. I look kind of fat in it, though. See, that's why I'm trying to slim down.

Q. What was the dinner like last night?

EVAN WEAVER: Oh, man, it was so good: Unlimited steak, just unbelievable. I came out of there probably four or five pounds heavier. But, you know, that's what practices are for. You know, you just kind of work it off in practice the next day. It's all fun. It's all fun and games from there.

Q. What was your favorite stadium this year and why?

EVAN WEAVER: I think USC was my favorite stadium, just growing up, watching Reggie Bush and Pete Carroll and Matt Leinart. Reggie Bush is probably the best college football player of all time, in my opinion. It's just cool to be able to play in the same place that he did.

Q. How sweet was it to get to pick six against U-Dub?

EVAN WEAVER: It was pretty cool. But, hopefully, they'll get another one this weekend against TCU and put a cap to a great year.



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Q. Obviously, you're playing at Chase Field where the Diamondbacks play. How do you feel about playing in a baseball stadium for this game?

EVAN WEAVER: I think it's going to be pretty cool, actually. It's a really nice stadium, from what I've seen. I saw the pictures from last year. I'm actually really excited to play in it because I've never played in a big baseball stadium. I've played in high school baseball, but that's nothing compared to this. But it's going to be really exciting, though, because the way they configure the field too to fit, it's going to be really interesting to see, I think. It'll be a really fun time.

Q. You have a little history in baseball, right? Talk about that a little bit.

EVAN WEAVER: I was actually pretty good at baseball. I was a center fielder until I started bulking up a little bit, and actually found out what the weight room was. So I went from 6'2", 205, to 6'2", 245. Well, 6'3" now, but it was -- kind of ended baseball after my junior year when I was, like, yeah, you know, I love it because it's probably my first love, but football just kept carrying me through everything. And just being able to go out there and hit people, that's my favorite part of it.

Q. What sport did you play instead of baseball your senior year?

EVAN WEAVER: I ran track. I was our anchor on the 4 by 100. It was really interesting. We were surprisingly good, but I'm not going to say it was because of me; it was because of the first three people. And one of them was the 110 state hurdler champion, so that probably helped out a little bit. I'd like to say I did my part. I did my part.

Q. Do you think about in bowl week your legacy and where the program is going after the game?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: Definitely. That's definitely a thought that comes across my mind. I know a lot of us seniors, just to see the ups and downs that we've been through as a program, as a team, and to see how far we've come, it's pretty remarkable.

And just to know that we have the opportunity to win a bowl game and really just put a stamp on our careers here at Cal, it is pretty special. And not only for ourselves but for the rest of the guys who have worked so hard this season to get to a bowl game and to have the opportunity to win and the support staff who work tirelessly to provide the best experience for us and the alumni and the donors, all of those people, it is really bigger than ourselves, the coaches, everybody. It is just a really cool opportunity. I'm excited to play my last game here at Cal.



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Q. I'm sure you've devoured film on TCU. What are your general impressions of their offense?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: They're a really talented team. They have some dynamic playmakers. Really, they're a powerhouse program. And I think just last year they were playing in the Alamo Bowl, one of the biggest bowls.

This year, I think they've had some tough breaks, some tough losses. I don't think that really defines them as a program. I think they're a very good team, and it is going to be a huge task for us. We're excited for the opportunity.

When I found out we were playing TCU, I was juiced. I was so excited knowing we're playing a really good opponent. I see a very talented team. I see a well-coached team, and I see a great opportunity for us to put a stamp on our season against a great team.

Q. I saw on the schedule you guys will do something at the convention center with Salvation Army. What does that mean to you?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: I love it, man. Just to give back to the community, it is special. At the end of the day, it is not about us. It is about everybody else. It is about giving back to the community, giving back to people who need help. So I'm excited for the opportunity to give back and to give our time and really just to -- yeah. It's going to be really cool.

Q. This has been a crazy emotional season for you guys; starting off undefeated, then dropping the next three. Can you talk about the emotions you guys went through as a team this season to get where you are now?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: Yeah, we've been through a lot of ups and downs. Like you said, we won the first three games. And then to have them go on a three-game losing streak, it was tough. There was a lot of people who -- we continue to stick to the plan. A lot of people wanted to continue to be a great team, and we still had all of our goals in play. There was no goal that we had set before the season that we still couldn't accomplish. We didn't know that. We just went through a tough span of games. And we just needed to get back on course, needed to get back to who we were as a football team. And we did that and then we ended up having a good second half of the season.

Q. So it's obvious why you guys are so excited to be here. I'm sure the energy is high, and it's the holidays right now, but what are you guys doing to stay focused before Wednesday's game?



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JORDAN KUNASZYK: We're sticking together as a team. We've got meetings. We've got practice. And then we're just -- we're a very accountable team. And that's something that we worked on this off-season, is accountability, working with each other, trusting each other. So we're a very focused group.

And Coach [Justin] Wilcox and his staff also does a great job of stressing the importance of why we're down here. We all know that we're down here, obviously, to win a football game. It's important that we enjoy the experience here of being in a bowl game, but our number one goal is to win a football game. I think That's the very first thing that comes to mind with everybody on our football team.

Q. So you had said you guys still have practice. The hard work's done. You guys got to a bowl game. So what are you looking forward to most in the last couple of practices before the game?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: Really just fine-tuning all the little things that we need to, making sure that we have all our checks, all of our communication in play and we're going to be focused.

I'm also looking just personally, myself, just enjoying these last couple days practicing as a Cal Bear. It's my final season. I'm just kind of soaking it all in, enjoying my time with all of my teammates and my coaches and just being ready to go.

Q. So this game, if you guys win, it will set the tone going into the future, going in on a high note in the 2019-2020 season. What does it mean to you as a Cal Bear to know the future of the program is going in a positive direction and how you're leaving it?

JORDAN KUNASZYK: Yeah, it means everything to me, really. Just to know that I'm leaving the program in better hands than when I came here, it's pretty special. This program has done so many great things for me, just provided me a way to get an education at this prestigious institution, to be able to fulfill one of my dreams of playing Division I football in the Pac-12, and just to have the opportunity to play here at this institute. It's special and to know that I have the opportunity to leave this program in better hands, to win a bowl game. And, really, for the program, it's special.

Q. Cal and TCU both have some of the best defenses in the country. What are you guys really focusing on to be able to outlast them defensively and be the stronger team even though you guys are both so strong?



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JORDAN KUNASZYK: Yeah, really just focusing on ourselves and focusing on every single play, making sure we have great communication, making sure that we're trusting the coaching that we've got throughout the week, throughout the whole season, sticking true to our technique and all the little things that go into a play. As long as we do that and we go out there and play hard like we always do, we're going to put ourselves in position to have the outcome that we want.