

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

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Editor: Ryan Finley / sportsed@tucson.com

No respect

Will Cats' unparalleled season be a winning routine or end in a flop?



ILLUSTRATION BY CHIARA BAUTISTA / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

No stage fright allowed

Picked to finish last in the Pac-12 South, Arizona faces two options: win over the crowd or get booed off the stage. **C6**

I'll tell ya ...

Greg Hansen delivers everything you need to know about the Cats, Pac-12 heading into a shortened 2020 season. **C8-9**

Back to school

Sophomore quarterback Grant Gunnell has the skills, confidence necessary to be Arizona's next offensive star. **C7**



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REBECCA SASNETT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Kevin Sumlin has gone 9-15 in two seasons as the Wildcats' head coach. His task this season — to return the UA to relevance — might be the most challenging one of his career.

WILDCATS LACK JUICE, AND IT'S SUMLIN WHO FEELS THE SQUEEZE



Greg Hansen

On the afternoon of Oct. 7, 2017, No. 1 Alabama beat unranked Texas A&M 27-19 in College Station, Texas, effectively putting an end to Kevin Sumlin's time as the Aggies' head coach.

Few if anyone in Tucson gave A&M's fall from grace a second thought. Kevin Sumlin? Who's that?

A few hours later at Colorado's Folsom Field, Rich Rodriguez's fading Arizona football program watched Ralphie the Buffalo take a pregame lap around the field and began what many thought would be another in a disturbing string of Arizona setbacks.

The Wildcats had gone 7-15 in their previous 22 games. The lowly Buffaloes were seven-point favorites that night. Arizona's future seemed to match that of Ralphie the Buffaloes' real name: Blackout.

And then UA backup quarterback Khalil Tate ran 58 yards for a touchdown. Followed by another of 28 yards. And then 47. And, indescribably, 75 yards for another.

Arizona won 45-42, and although the breaking story in Tucson and around college football was that Tate had rushed for an NCAA quarterbacking record 327 yards — completing 12 of 13 passes for 154 more yards — I thought there was much more to the story than Khalil Tate.

I thought RichRod had saved his job.

As Tate's extraordinary October continued — he rushed for a combined 613 yards in rousing victories over UCLA, Cal and Washington State — there couldn't have been a soul in college football who didn't think it a reach that (a) Tate could win the Heisman Trophy in 2018 or 2019 and (b) the Wildcats might truly get to the Rose Bowl before the decade was out.

It was as if Arizona's long-muffled football program had gotten a vaccine and all was well.

The Wildcats averaged 558 yards and 49 points per game in those October 2017 victories.

But just as expectations multiplied, it all came crashing down.

The Wildcats have since gone 10-19. RichRod was indeed fired, Tate mysteriously flamed out and the Arizona has struggled just to be competitive. The Wildcats' 10 victories in that 29-game stretch came against teams that went a combined 48-80.

Texas A&M paid Sumlin \$10 million to leave the premises. Arizona offered him about \$15 million to coach the Wildcats through 2022.

How's it working out?

Arizona has gone 9-15 over the last two seasons, has been swept by Arizona State in two Territorial Cup games and Sumlin had second thoughts about the defensive coaching staff he initially hired;



REBECCA SASNETT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Kevin Sumlin gives a thumbs up before an Oct. 16 practice on campus. Sumlin, 56, failed to take the UA to a bowl game in his first two seasons.

the Wildcats begin the 2020 season with an entirely new defensive staff.

Indeed, there is a short list of positives about Arizona football, a program that has gone flat since Tate's extraordinary October 2017. There is little or no juice.

It would be a fascinating story if, at 56, Sumlin can rediscover the fire that led him to back-to-back seasons of 12-1 at Houston in 2011 and 11-2 at Texas A&M in 2012. In college football years, 2012 was a lifetime ago.

Outside of the established mega-powers, a rise to success is a fleeting notion in college football. The odds of an Arizona or an Illinois or a Kansas breaking through is dream-on territory.

Sumlin was one of 19 FBS coaches hired for the 2008 season, at Houston. He was coming off a five-year period at Oklahoma when the talent-blessed Sooners won 54 games. He had more than earned a chance to run his own show.

Now edging past the prime of his coaching career at resource-rich Texas A&M, asking Sumlin to restore Arizona to the UA's version of winning football appears to be a bridge too far.

It would be a wonderful story. It would rival the October 2017 legend of Khalil Tate. But as of now, it remains a work of fiction. Hiring college football coaches is an inexact business, a game filled with peril. When Sumlin

went to Houston in 2008, Power 5 conference schools simultaneously hired a dozen football coaches. Only three avoided getting fired from those jobs: Dabo Swinney at Clemson, David Cutcliffe at Duke and Paul Johnson at Georgia Tech.

Here's what happened to the other Power 5 conference coaches hired in 2008:

- Houston Nutt, Ole Miss. Fired in four seasons.
- Rich Rodriguez, Michigan. Fired in three seasons.
- Mike Sherman, Texas A&M. Fired in four seasons.
- Art Briles, Baylor. Fired in eight seasons.
- Rick Neuheisel, UCLA. Fired in four seasons.

- Paul Wulff, Washington State. Fired in four seasons.
- Bill Stewart, West Virginia. Fired in four seasons.
- Bobby Petrino, Arkansas. Fired in four seasons.
- Bo Pelini, Nebraska. Fired in four seasons.

None have been able to regain their coaching magic. Of that group, only RichRod and Petrino were hired again by Power 5 schools — Arizona and Louisville, respectively. Both were fired again.

As such, UA followers should've seen this struggle coming.

Contact sports columnist Greg Hansen at 520-573-4362 or ghansen@tucson.com. On Twitter: @ghansen711

SEASON UNLIKE ANY OTHER OPENS IN SALT LAKE CITY, ENDS WITH A TBA FOR UA

By Michael Lev
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Arizona Wildcats have a tough road ahead.

Arizona will open the season on Saturday at Utah, which won the South Division last year. After that, the UA hosts USC, which is the South favorite this year.

The Wildcats' crossover game is among the most difficult in the league: at Washington on Nov. 21. Arizona plays three road games among its first four, with a trip to UCLA on tap the next week.

The final two known games on the UA schedule are at home vs. Colorado on Dec. 5 and vs. Arizona State on Friday, Dec. 11. The second cross-division game is still to be determined and will take place the weekend of Dec. 18-19.

This is the third version of the Pac-12 football schedule. The original slate was negated in summer, when the league implemented a 10-game all-conference format to mitigate COVID-19 issues.

The Pac-12 then postponed the '20 season until January before reversing course.

Here's a snapshot look at the Wildcats' six known opponents:

WEEK 1: UTAH

- **When:** Saturday, 2 p.m. (ESPNU)
- **Where:** Rice-Eccles Stadium, Salt Lake City
- **Last matchup:** Utah 35, UA 7 on Nov. 23, 2019, in Tucson
- **Last time at venue:** Utah 42, UA 10 on Oct. 12, 2018
- **Utes in a sentence:** Utah lost several defensive standouts to the NFL — plus tailback Zack Moss, the 2019 Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year — but Kyle Whittingham is among the top coaches in the league, and the Utes have won the past four meetings.

WEEK 2: USC

- **When:** Nov. 14
- **Where:** Arizona Stadium

MORE ABOUT THE PAC-12 SCHEDULE

- The Pac-12 Championship Game will take place at the home of the highest-seeded team. The game was supposed to have been played at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas. That new partnership will begin next year.
- There are no details yet on the Week 7 pairings.
- Every game through the first six weeks will be televised by an ESPN or Fox outlet. Fox will televise the Pac-12 Championship Game.
- All Pac-12 South Division rivalry games will take place during Week 6 (Dec. 11-12), while all Pac-12 North Division rivalry games will kick off on the Friday of Week 4 (Nov. 27, the day after Thanksgiving)
- Some games will kick off in a new television window: 10 a.m.

• **Last matchup:** USC 41, UA 14 on Oct. 19, 2019, in Los Angeles

• **Last time at venue:** USC 24, UA 20 on Sept. 29, 2018

• **Trojans in a sentence:** Last season ended with Clay Helton on the hottest of seats, but there's a renewed sense of optimism about the Trojans with Todd Orlando on board as defensive coordinator and Kedon Slovis back at quarterback after a stellar freshman campaign (3,502 passing yards, 30 TD passes, 71.9% completion rate).

WEEK 3: WASHINGTON

- **When:** Nov. 21
- **Where:** Husky Stadium, Seattle
- **Last matchup:** Washington 51, UA 27 on Oct. 12, 2019, in Tucson
- **Last time at venue:** Washington 49, UA 3 on Oct. 31, 2015
- **Huskies in a sentence:** Washington is undergoing a transition at the top, from Chris Petersen to Jimmy Lake, but it should be a smooth one with Lake already having been on staff since the 2014 season; he was named as Petersen's successor in early December of last year.

WEEK 4: UCLA

- **When:** Nov. 28
- **Where:** Rose Bowl, Pasadena, California
- **Last matchup:** UA 20, UCLA 17 on Sept. 28, 2019, in Tucson
- **Last time at venue:** UCLA 31,

UA 30 on Oct. 20, 2018

• **Bruins in a sentence:** The Chip Kelly era hasn't gone according to plan, with UCLA posting a 7-17 record in his two seasons, but the Bruins do return quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson, who showed flashes of greatness as a sophomore last year (25 total touchdowns).

WEEK 5: COLORADO

- **When:** Dec. 5
- **Where:** Arizona Stadium
- **Last matchup:** UA 35, Colorado 30 on Oct. 5, 2019, in Boulder
- **Last time at venue:** UA 42, Colorado 34 on Nov. 2, 2018
- **Buffaloes in a sentence:** Colorado had a challenging offseason, with Mel Tucker leaving for Michigan State in February, and new coach Karl Dorrell never got a chance to work with his team on the field in spring before practices were shut down because of the pandemic.

WEEK 6: ARIZONA STATE

- **When:** Dec. 11 (Friday), 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)
- **Where:** Arizona Stadium
- **Last matchup:** ASU 24, UA 14 on Nov. 30, 2019, in Tempe
- **Last time at venue:** ASU 41, UA 40 on Nov. 24, 2018
- **Sun Devils in a sentence:** If USC isn't the favorite in the Pac-12 South, ASU might be; dynamic sophomore QB Jayden Daniels should be bigger and better in 2020 after posting a 17-2 touch-down-to-interception ratio as a 175-pound freshman.

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REBECCA SASNETT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Arizona Wildcats open the season Saturday as a two-touchdown underdog at Utah. Expect more of the same this season, as the UA has been projected by some outlets to go winless.

WILDCATS KNOW RESPECT MUST BE EARNED IN 2020

By Michael Lev
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Is Arizona the most disrespectful, downtrodden Power Five program in America?

That's probably not the question you want to be asking entering Year 3 of the Kevin Sumlin regime. But the perception outside the walls of the Lowell-Stevens Football Facility isn't pretty.

After the Pac-12 Conference released the first version of its all-conference schedule on July 31, The Athletic's Stewart Mandel — a respected, longtime chronicler of college football — predicted the Wildcats to go 0-10. Mandel even had Arizona losing at home to Colorado, which had to change coaches in mid-February, didn't practice a single time in spring, lost its quarterback and top receiver and has lost three in a row against the Cats. Mandel's conclusion: "The best-case scenario for Kevin Sumlin's third season is that it gets canceled altogether."

After version 3.0 of the schedule came out in early October, The San Jose Mercury News' Jon Wilner — the premier reporter on all things Pac-12 — also picked Arizona to go winless. Wilner's program trajectory for the UA? "Downward with a chance of collapse."

Coaches and players often say they're unaware of such predictions. Sumlin scoffed at the annual Pac-12 media poll, which had his team finishing last in the South Division.

"I do not pay attention to it," Sumlin said, "because the people who create that ranking will not play or coach."

But at least one of his players — his most prominent and important one — certainly seemed to know what others were thinking. He also seemed rankled by it.

"Saying we're not gonna have any wins is almost a joke to me," sophomore quarterback Grant Gunnell said. "I feel like we're going to shock some people."

Does Arizona have the means to do it? The Wildcats went 9-15 in Sumlin's first two seasons. They lost their last seven games last season. They also lost three projected starters to transfer from a defense that couldn't afford to lose anyone.

247Sports.com released its "Team Talent Composite" in mid-October. The website measures a team's overall talent by totaling the recruiting rankings among players on the current roster. Arizona ranked last in the Pac-12 and 69th overall. Only two Power Five programs were lower: Kansas State (70th) and Kansas (71st).

Truth be told, the Jayhawks are in a worse place than the Wildcats. Kansas hasn't won more than three games in a season since 2009. Arizona was one play



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Kevin Sumlin talks with UA president Robert C. Robbins before an Oct. 21 practice. Robbins followed the coach's career when both were in Texas.

away from earning a bowl berth in Sumlin's first season. It would have been the Wildcats' sixth in seven years.

But respect is earned, not given, and one of the wisest Wildcats seems to grasp that.

"I don't think we get the respect that we deserve," senior tight end Bryce Wolma said. "But, on the other hand, we've got to go out and prove it. So I think this is a big year for us."

"It seems like the last three years everyone's going into the season doubting, picking us ... last in the Pac-12. Guys have taken that personally ... to get rid of that (stigma) around our program. We're definitely looking to change that up this year, and it's gonna take everybody. But I know that we've got the guys to do it."

Unhappy pairing

Sumlin arrived in January 2018 with great expectations. Sure, things had soured for him at Texas A&M. After 11-2 and 9-4 seasons, the Aggies plateaued at 8-5. They were 7-5 when Sumlin was dismissed in late 2017.

But Sumlin had won 66.2% of his games at A&M and 67.3% at Houston, and how could Arizona possibly do better than that? He inherited a team that finished 7-6 under Rich Rodriguez and had a dynamic, talented quarterback in Khalil Tate. It appeared to be the perfect marriage.

The honeymoon didn't last long. Arizona lost the '18 opener to BYU. Tate, who had rushed for more than 1,400 yards the previous season, barely ran at all. Questions immediately surfaced about Tate's fit in coordinator Noel Mazzone's offense.

Tate got hurt the following week in a blowout loss at Houston, spraining his ankle, and didn't look quite right until late in the season. A November rally put the Wildcats in position to earn a bowl berth, and Arizona was 15 minutes away from pulling it off. But the UA squandered a 19-point fourth-quarter

lead against Arizona State. There would be no postseason in Year 1 under Sumlin.

"Now you've put yourself on alert," said former Colorado, Washington and UCLA coach Rick Neuheisel, now a college football analyst for CBS Sports. "You've put a little pressure on 2019. You get out of the box 4-1, then all of a sudden you don't win a game. Now it looks like, from the outside, that there's something from a structural standpoint that's broken."

Arizona ended the '19 season on a seven-game losing streak. After a promising start, Tate struggled and lost the full-time starting job. His eligibility expired, and the one-time Heisman Trophy candidate is currently out of football.

It's unfair to pin all the blame for the Wildcats' struggles the past two seasons on the quarterback and his coaches. But the way the situation unfolded only did further damage to Sumlin's reputation as a QB developer after five-star recruits Kyle Allen and Kyler Murray transferred out of Texas A&M.

Some UA fans faulted Mazzone, although, as with all aspects of Tate's career here, it's not that simple. No matter: Arizona is now being led by Gunnell — Sumlin and Mazzone's handpicked quarterback. Gunnell initially committed to them at A&M. When the coaches came to Tucson, Gunnell followed.

While not specifically referring to Tate or anything that happened the previous two seasons, Mazzone agreed with the notion that the Wildcats seem to be rowing in the same direction now. That wasn't always the case in 2018 and '19 on either side of the ball.

"Like in anything — any team, any business — everybody has to have the same vision and be on the same mission," Mazzone said. "In any kind of organization, ... you've got to have a captain of the ship, or nobody knows which way to oar. And I really have seen that in guys like Grant, guys like

(center) Josh McCauley, guys like (receiver) Boobie Curry.

"I see a bunch of guys out there that see us as a team and not a bunch of individuals."

Finances and fairness

After last year's Territorial Cup, a 24-14 defeat in Tempe, UA athletic director Dave Heeke held an impromptu media scrum. The news: Sumlin would be back for Year 3.

"This is not where we wanted to be at this point," Heeke said. "But we're committed ... to the process, moving this thing forward."

Heeke made no mention of the financial impact of letting Sumlin go. If it had happened before mid-January 2019, he would have been owed \$10 million in two payments. The buyout was hard to justify then. It's almost impossible to fathom now, amid the coronavirus pandemic, even at a 25% or 50% reduction.

"Economics are a real factor in athletic departments today," Neuheisel said. "The hit they've taken during the pandemic has been excruciating. You can ease some of that tension by calling this season a write-off. Financially, it makes sense. You can make a case that it's the fair thing to do."

"The problem is, if you struggle again this season, what does it do to your fan base in terms of motivation to come back and participate in the program going forward? That is an economic question as well."

If Sumlin were fired shortly after the Dec. 19 season finale, he'd be owed \$7.5 million. If it happened in mid-January, he would be owed \$5 million. Either way, it's a sunk cost. And if you wait to save \$2.5 million, you fall further behind in the hiring and recruiting cycles.

A strong argument can be made, as Neuheisel mentioned, that 2020 ought to be a write-off. The pandemic threw everything into upheaval. It led to the transfers of veteran linebackers Tony Fields II and Colin Schooler, plus receiver Brenden Schooler, Colin's older brother.

If the season had started when it was supposed to, all three of those players would be wearing UA colors — and the Wildcats' outlook would be brighter. It isn't Sumlin's fault that they left.

The question is whether the program's critics, or even its supporters, will acknowledge those nuances — especially with that seven-game losing streak looming over the program.

"I give him (a pass for the transfers), because I don't think that happens but for the pandemic and the decisions the Pac-12 made," Neuheisel said. "But ... no one's going to give a dang

about that. He's got to find a way to do it with the kids he has, find a way to right the ship. Because at day's end, Arizona needs to be relevant again, and it needs to be relevant again soon."

'Win the day'

One big upset could change everything. No one knows that better than Sumlin.

His first season at A&M was going well. The Aggies were 7-2 when they visited No. 1 Alabama. The program went supernova when Johnny Manziel led them to a 29-24 victory over the Crimson Tide.

"Here's a guy who understands exactly what that means. He lived it," Neuheisel said of Sumlin. "He saw his star go through the roof with that kind of outcome."

A through line can be drawn from that game to Sumlin's hiring at Arizona. UA president Robert C. Robbins, who grew up in SEC country, worked in Houston while Sumlin soared in College Station.

"When you go into Tuscaloosa and knock off Alabama and Nick Saban, that gets people's attention," Robbins told the Star in July 2018. "I had known about him, of course, from Houston. He won there. He won at A&M. And he's going to win at the University of Arizona."

The early portion of the revised schedule is formidable — but rife with opportunities. Arizona is a two-touchdown underdog for Saturday's opener at Utah. USC and Washington should be heavily favored as well.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. The Wildcats have a plan to upend perceptions and change their narrative.

The so-called experts say 0-7. The Cats say 1-0. That's their mantra, instilled by strength coach Brian Johnson and prescribed to daily.

"We don't really care or worry about what they're saying about us," defensive lineman Mykee Irving said. "At the end of the day, it's about us. Every day, we just want to win the day."

It's a prudent approach. The first two years under Sumlin were rough. The future is uncertain. Respect is hard to come by. But it's attainable.

"Sometimes you hit some rocks when you're trying to dig a foundation to build a program," Mazzone said. "But ... I think a lot of pieces are starting to fall in place."

"Now, obviously, like any job, you've got to go out and put a good product on the field and win football games. But I love where we're at right now. I love where the mindset of this football team is and what Coach has developed here, and I'm excited to watch these guys play."

ARMED AND READY: CATS' GUNNELL SET FOR SCRUTINY COMING HIS WAY

By Michael Lev
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Pressure? Grant Gunnell welcomes it.

Not necessarily the in-your-face pressure from a blitzing linebacker. No quarterback likes that, including Arizona's.

We're talking about the pressure that comes with leading an offense and becoming the face of a program. It can be daunting, especially when that program has lost seven games in a row, has an embattled head coach and lacks depth and experience at key positions on defense.

Gunnell wouldn't have it any other way.

"There's always pressure when you're playing football," the sophomore said. "That's not a bad thing to me. I see and feel pressure as something that drives me. If you're not feeling pressure, those butterflies in your stomach, you don't love football. You can ask anyone."

Arizona is asking a lot of Gunnell. Although he has only three career starts, he is the undisputed starting quarterback for 2020 and beyond. He was tasked with keeping the team together when they couldn't physically be together in the spring and summer. He represented the Wildcats during the virtual version of Pac-12 Media Days. Only two of the 12 players were sophomores: Gunnell and Arizona State quarterback Jayden Daniels.

UA players recently voted for team captains. Gunnell was the only sophomore to make the cut. The other four were fourth- or fifth-year veterans.

"He's a natural-born leader," Wildcats cornerback Christian Roland-Wallace said.

Although there's still work to be done - Gunnell showed great promise as a freshman, but it's a small sample size and he still has much to prove - the record-setting quarterback from Houston has toiled to reach this point. He's the starting QB for a Power Five program, piloting an offense built around him.

"Grant has unbelievable passion for this game, and he wants to be really good at it," said offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Noel Mazzone, who recruited Gunnell to Texas A&M before both made their way to Tucson. "This is something that he's worked (for) basically his whole young life up to this point, to play major college football. It's just very, very important to him."

The offseason was bumpy for Gunnell and every college football player across America. The coronavirus pandemic halted spring practice. It disrupted summer workouts. It delayed the start of the season.

If anything, though, it only strengthened Gunnell's resolve. He did everything he could to make himself better so the offense could perform and the team could win.

"Even with the unknowns of when we were going to play, or if we were going to play," Mazzone said, "he never took a day off."

Dogged determination

Pressure? Grant Gunnell is having a blast.

After months and months of Zoom meetings, at-home workouts, individual drills and socially distanced throwing sessions - all enjoyable and beneficial in their own ways - Gunnell again is doing



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

In only his second season at UA, Grant Gunnell has emerged as one of the team's leaders. He made three starts last season as a freshman.



JOSH GALEMORE / ARIZONA DAILY STAR 2019

Grant Gunnell threw for nine touchdowns and one interception as a freshman, and had 352 yards and a touchdown in a 20-17 win over UCLA in his first career start.

what he loves most.

"Right now it's the best time of my life, getting to go out there and go against the defense live, see how the offense is going, get through some growing pains," Gunnell said. "There's nothing better than playing football."

Gunnell concedes he doesn't have many other hobbies. One of them is bowling. Another illustrates his willingness to take on responsibility.

Gunnell has an 8-month-old English Labrador named Junior.

"He's like a son to me," said Gunnell, who turns 20 in late November.

Junior likes to chew things. Gunnell has lost several pairs of shoes and a pillow. Junior is apt to get in the trash.

"It's definitely taught me a lot of patience," Gunnell said. "He's gotten some stuff he shouldn't have. I love him, but he gets on my nerves."

Those coping skills will come in handy when Arizona opens the season at Utah on Saturday. Even without fans in the stands, Gunnell and the Wildcats will face

adversity at some point. Probably multiple points. He knows it will be up to him to steer the offense through those rough waters.

"You're going to have downs, you're going to have lows," Gunnell said. "You have to learn how to (rise) above them. You can't let anyone else see you down, because the whole offense is gonna be down."

The pandemic provided Gunnell with an unexpected training opportunity. Usually during the off-season, quarterbacks are in charge of organizing player-run practices. This off-season, Gunnell had to keep his teammates engaged and enthused when they were spread about the country. He'd send inspirational texts, quoting movies and his quarterbacking role model, Tom Brady.

"Because you're not seeing them every day, you've got to put forth that effort to ... communicate with your teammates," veteran center Josh McCauley said. "It builds a stronger bond."

Players and coaches commonly praise quarterbacks for their lead-

ership ability, whether it's real or not. In Gunnell's case, his actions speak louder than those words.

When offensive lineman Donovan Laie announced his intent to transfer in late September, Gunnell led the recruitment effort to bring him back, calling Laie multiple times and having dinner with him. Laie changed his mind the next day.

When the Wildcats followed the lead of their USC brethren and penned a letter to California Gov. Gavin Newsom seeking aid to get the Pac-12 season going, Gunnell worked with UA Chief of Staff Dennis Polian to craft the message. Gunnell then posted it on his Twitter feed.

"He's very loyal," Mazzone said. "Relationships are important to him. His teammates are important to him. He's a really team-oriented guy."

"He has a lot of the qualities that they don't measure at the (scouting) combine. They can measure how high you jump, how fast you are, how far you can throw it. Those are good to have, and a lot of times you need those. But those

don't guarantee you're going to be successful.

"If you look back at most successful quarterbacks, they have a lot of the traits that you can't measure. Grant has those things."

Greater expectations

Pressure? Grant Gunnell knows it's coming.

Although he prepared as if he were the starter last season, Gunnell is the starter now. That changes everyone's expectations.

They were minimal when Gunnell made his first career start against UCLA, subbing for the injured Khalil Tate. Gunnell exceeded them by passing for 352 yards and a touchdown in a 20-17 victory over the Bruins.

Gunnell started the Oregon and Utah games late in the season. No one blamed him for those defeats, even though Arizona scored only 13 total points.

Those were two of several games in which Gunnell shared time with Tate. Sometimes the contests were close when Gunnell entered; sometimes they already were out of reach.

Gunnell finished with sterling numbers: a 9-to-1 touchdown-to-interception ratio, a 65.2% completion rate and a 150.18 efficiency rating. The latter two are top-five marks in UA history.

However, as Gunnell himself noted, "I was the backup. I didn't have as much pressure on me."

Now, as the face of the program, every pass he throws and every decision he makes will be scrutinized.

Gunnell's teammates believe he's ready for that role.

"Last year he was going back and forth with Khalil, coming in and out," receiver Jamarye Joiner said. "This year it's really his offense. He's taken leadership and ownership of everything that's going on."

"He's really taking charge ... and that's what we need in order to win these games."

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The Arizona Wildcats charge onto the field before last year's game against Texas Tech. Kevin Sumlin's second season as the UA's coach started promisingly, but ended with seven consecutive losses. This year's seven-game schedule begins with a game at Utah and a new full-time starter, Grant Gunnell, under center. UA's young, thin defense must improve for the Wildcats to exceed expectations.

Pac-12's cold open: League schedule pays little attention to temps

Those who composed the Pac-12's 2020 football schedule are tempting the weather gods like never before in league history. They scheduled Utah to play at Colorado at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 11. The average low in Boulder on Dec. 11 is 23 degrees. They scheduled Cal to play at chi-chi-chilly Martin Stadium in Pullman, Washington, on Dec. 12. Let's just say the coldest kickoff temperature in Arizona's modern Pac-10/12 history was 34 degrees at Washington State on Nov. 8, 1986. And then there's an Oregon State at Utah game on Dec. 5. Average low in Salt Lake City on Dec. 5 is 29 degrees. The general public is not expected to be allowed to attend Pac-12 games this year. Sitting at home, warm and toasty, often makes viewing a Snow Bowl or a Below Freezing Bowl, more enjoyable to watch. More? The Pac-12 must still add a full weekend of games Dec. 18-19. Let's just hope it leaves Pullman, Boulder and Salt Lake City out of it. Arizona is scheduled to play Arizona State in Tucson on Dec. 11, which will be the latest regular-season game in program history. Again, the discomfort from potential cold will be inflicted on players, coaches and security personnel, not fans. Here's a look at the five regular-season Arizona Stadium games played on the latest dates in December:
• Dec. 9, 1939: Arizona vs. Loyola Marymount. Low temperature: 46.
• Dec. 6, 1941: Arizona vs. Utah. Low temperature: 45.
• Dec. 6, 1947: Arizona vs. Utah. Low temperature: 46.
• Dec. 5, 1970: Arizona vs. Arizona State. Low temperature: 36.
• Dec. 5, 2008: Arizona vs. Arizona State. Low temperature: 43.



Longtime NFL assistant coach Bill Musgrave is in his first season as Cal's offensive coordinator.

Introducing six new offensive coordinators

The Pac-12 has 11 new coordinators for the 2020 season — six offensive, five defensive — which is probably the most, or close to it, in league history. There are no offensive coordinators, new or old, with reputations that have made them recognizable to the average fan. That is a big change. In 2008, for example, Pac-12 offensive coordinators included Chip Kelly at Oregon, Norm Chow at UCLA, Sonny Dykes at Arizona, Steve Sarkisian at USC and David Shaw at Stanford. All went on to become head coaches. The returning OCs include Arizona's Noel Mazzone, UCLA's Justin Frye, Stanford's Tavita Pritchard, Utah's well-traveled Andy Ludwig, Oregon State's Brian Lindgren and USC's 35-year-old Graham Harrell, who was hired from the North Texas Mean Green. No marquee names there. Here's a look at the league's six new offensive coordinators:
• ZAK HILL, Arizona State: Arrived from Boise State with a background at Hawaii and Eastern Washington. Hill played briefly in the NFL from 1997-2000.
• BILL MUSGRAVE, Cal: The most well-known of the new offensive coordinators. Musgrave was Oregon's starting QB in the late 1980s, long before the Ducks were prominent. Musgrave, 52, has bounced around the NFL for 17 years.
• DARREN CHIAVERINI, Colorado: At 43, Chiaverini is coaching his alma mater after stops at Texas Tech and UCLA. He has a lot of work to do.
• JOE MOORHEAD, Oregon: A Fordham man, Moorhead is the rare under-the-radar coordinator at Autzen Stadium He has coached at Pitt, Akron, UConn, Penn State and spent two uneven years as head coach at Mississippi State.
• JOHN DONOVAN, Washington: Another low-profile coordinator, Donovan, 46, has mostly been an obscure coach at, among other places, Villanova, Georgia Tech, Maryland, Vanderbilt and Penn State.
• BRIAN SMITH, Washington State: A former Hawaii Rainbow Warrior, Smith's path to the Pac-12 went through Occidental, Portland State, Oregon State and Cal Lutheran.

GREG HANSEN'S GUIDE TO THE 2020 COLLEGE FOOTBALL SEASON

Picking the Pac-12

SOUTH DIVISION

- 1. USC (6-1): Quarterback Kedon Slovis is league's most feared player.
2. ARIZONA STATE (5-2): If QB Jayden Daniels stays healthy, it'll be a big year.
3. UTAH (4-3): Utes are in a one-year rebuilding phase.
4. UCLA (3-4): Is this the end for Chip Kelly?
5. ARIZONA (2-5): Beating Colorado is a must.
6. COLORADO (1-6): Going to be cold in Boulder.



NORTH DIVISION

- 1. CAL (6-1): Justin Wilcox's club is the real deal.
2. OREGON (5-2): Ducks have quarterback uncertainties.
3. STANFORD (4-3): Cardinal is coming off rare losing season.
4. OREGON STATE (3-4): Beavers are on the rise.
5. WASHINGTON (2-5): Chris Petersen opted out just in time.
6. WASHINGTON STATE (1-6): Mike Leach knew when to get out.



Four opinions on Pac-12 football in 2020

- 1. Since Chip Kelly went 46-7 as Oregon's head coach from 2009-12, he has gone off the rails. Kelly's four years in the NFL produced a 28-35 record. His two seasons at UCLA have been 3-9 and 4-8 busts. Kelly had all the resources at Oregon, but once he got to the share-the-load NFL and now to perennial football underachiever UCLA, he has found his "system" works better with elite talent. At 57, Kelly has seen his best years.
2. What was Colorado athletic director Rick George thinking when he hired Karl Dorrell to be the Buffaloes' new head coach? Dorrell was 35-27 in five years at UCLA; the Bruins finished in the AP Top 25 poll once — 16th in 2005 — before he was fired. Dorrell has since been a rank-and-file assistant coach for four NFL teams; he also spent one year at Vanderbilt. At 57, Dorrell enters a daunting challenge to make CU into anything more than a .500 team.
3. How long will Herm Edwards stay at ASU? He is 66; he surely doesn't see the \$3.5 million-per-year salary. The best guess is that he'll coach sophomore QB Jayden Daniels through his college days and then step away, attempting to hand the Sun Devils program to former Arizona linebacker Antonio Pierce, who is clearly being groomed for the job. Big question: Would Arizona ever be bold enough to try to scuttle ASU's plan and bring Pierce back home to Tucson to replace Kevin Sumlin?
4. The TV networks and Pac-12 shareholders regret the cancellation of four made-for-TV games: USC at Alabama; Michigan at Washington; Ohio State at Oregon; Stanford at Notre Dame. But those would've been potentially four losses for the league, further staining its football reputation. The most regrettable cancellation was BYU at Utah, which might be the most intense rivalry any league member enjoys. BYU's rise into the top 10 this year might be a good story, but the Cougars' soft schedule — they play Navy, Texas State, Troy, UTSA, Houston and Louisiana Tech — is such that even Arizona would likely be 6-0 playing that group of opponents.



Kyle Whittingham begins his 16th season as Utah's coach.

Utah's Whittingham keeps defying the odds

In a century of football for Pac-12 schools, no head coach has remained at that school for more than 22 years. Utah's Kyle Whittingham begins his 16th season at Utah, by far the longest of any conference coach. He is 61. Stanford's David Shaw is next, entering his ninth season. Other than Whittingham, the average tenure for the league's head coaches this year is 2½ years. Here's a list of the longest-tenured head football coaches at Pac-12 schools and at what age they departed that job:
• 22 YEARS: Frank Kush, ASU. Fired at age 50 in 1979.
• 20 YEARS: Terry Donahue, UCLA. Retired at age 49 in 1995.
• 18 YEARS: Rich Brooks, Oregon. Left to coach in NFL at age 53 in 1995.
• 18 YEARS: Don James, Washington. Retired at age 60 in 1993.
• 18 YEARS: Jim Owens, Washington. Fired at age 47 in 1974.
• 16 YEARS: John McKay, USC. Left to coach the NFL's Buccaneers at age 52 in 1976.
• 16 YEARS: Len Casanova, Oregon. Retired in 1967 at age 61.
• 15 YEARS: Whittingham.
• 14 YEARS: Dick Tomey, Arizona. Parted ways with school in 2000 at 62.
• 14 YEARS: Mike Bellotti, Oregon. Retired at age 58 in 2009.
• 14 YEARS: Mike Price, WSU. Left to coach at Alabama at age 56 in 2003.

Pac-12's arms race rages on

After the coronavirus pandemic shut down spring practices at all Pac-12 schools, many in the league also began protecting their pocketbooks. But the arms race didn't stop at Oregon and Utah, the league's two rising powers. Oregon will unveil its new \$12 million scoreboard when the Ducks open the season at Autzen Stadium against Stanford on Nov. 7. The Ducks' excessive spending hasn't changed. The 12,276-square-foot scoreboard will be the largest in college football, more than double the size of Arizona's one-grand video board at Arizona Stadium. When unveiled five years ago, the UA scoreboard was the largest in the Pac-12, at 5,352 square feet. That was soon surpassed by Sun Devil Stadium's 5,419-square-foot video board, and by the new USC scoreboard, 6,000 square feet, at the remodeled Los Angeles Coliseum. Utah has continued with its expansion of the south end of Rice-Eccles Stadium, an \$80 million project that will increase capacity to 51,000 fans — up from 45,000 — and feature a video board of about 6,500 square feet.

Star players have been few and far between at Arizona

Since the league expanded to 12 teams in 2011, the Pac-12 all-conference first team has included 244 players — an average of 27 selections per season. Among the league's 12 schools, Arizona ranks last with four first-teamers: Ka'Dem Carey in 2012 and 2013; Scooby Wright in 2014; and J.J. Taylor in 2018. Here are the teams with the most first-team selections over the last nine seasons:
• UTAH: 39
• STANFORD: 37
• USC: 36
• WASHINGTON: 35
• OREGON: 29
• ARIZONA STATE: 18
• UCLA: 11
• CAL: 10
• WASHINGTON STATE: 10
• COLORADO: 6
• OREGON STATE: 5
• ARIZONA: 4
Those numbers mirror the winning percentages in league games over the same period. If you have star-level players, you win more often. Duh, right? Utah, Stanford, USC and Oregon combined to have 175 of those 244 all-league picks, or 72%. It should be no surprise that those five schools rank No. 1-5 in wins over those nine seasons:
• STANFORD: 58-23
• OREGON: 57-24
• USC: 56-25
• WASHINGTON: 49-32
• UTAH: 42-39
Here's the bottom tier during that period:
• COLORADO: 20-61
• OREGON STATE: 23-58
• CAL: 26-55
• ARIZONA: 32-49



Grant Gunnell's prolific high school career suggests that he might have what it takes to run Arizona's pass-heavy offense.

Gunnell's background suggests big things

Arizona sophomore quarterback Grant Gunnell is the most highly recruited QB in the school's Pac-10/12 years. He was not only a four-star prospect from Houston's St. Plus X High School — home to former NFL quarterback and Denver Broncos head coach Gary Kubiak — but Gunnell was the first-team All-Texas prep quarterback on the USA Today 2018 list. No previous UA quarterback — not Nick Foles, not Willie Tuitama, not Keith Smith, not Tom Tunnicliffe — arrived in Tucson with a Gunnell-type résumé. The other four skill-position players on USA Today's All-Texas team of 2018 were similarly high-profile prospects:
• GARRETT WILSON: The five-star receiver from Lake Travis High School in Austin caught 30 passes for 432 yards and five TDs as an Ohio State freshman. He caught a team-high seven passes in the Buckeyes' opener against Nebraska.
• ZACH EVANS: The running back from North Shore High School was a five-star recruit who chose TCU over Texas and LSU. Wilson, a freshman, is in TCU's running-back rotation.
• JASE MCCLELLAN: The five-star receiver from Aledo signed with Alabama and is redshirting.
• THEO WEASE: The five-star receiver from Allen has already caught 18 passes for 233 yards in five games for the Oklahoma Sooners.

Gunnell originally committed to play for Kevin Sumlin at Texas A&M, then picked Arizona once Sumlin was fired by the Aggies. It's unlikely Gunnell would be starting at A&M this year: Senior Kellen Mond has started 39 games for the Aggies with 8,363 passing yards and 1,361 rushing yards and 82 total touchdowns.

Arizona's losing streak enters danger zone

The UA concluded the 2019 season with a school-record seven consecutive conference losses. The school record for consecutive losses, all games, is eight, set by John Mackovic's 2003 team that went 2-10. Given its low profile, Arizona is entering dreaded territory. If it goes 0-7 this season, it would be challenging the list of chronic losers in Pac-12 history. Here's the list of conference-game losing streaks to avoid:
20: Oregon State lost 20 consecutive league games from 1979-82 and actually had an 0-29-1 period that ran through 1983. The Beavers also had a 14-game losing streak from 1996-98 and a 13-game conference losing streak from 2016-18.
16: Washington State went 0-9 to finish the 2009 conference season and 0-7 to start the 2010 season.
14: Washington, of all teams, lost 14 league games in succession, going 0-8 at the finish of the 2004 season and 0-6 to start 2005.
14: Colorado went 0-8 to conclude its second Pac-12 season, 2012, and 0-6 to start the following year.
12: Cal was 0-8 to end the 2001 league season, sandwiched by four more conference losses in 2000 and 2002.
• NOTE: Arizona State has never lost more than five consecutive conference games since entering the Pac-10 in 1978. Oregon's longest streak is seven, in 1980-81, and USC's longest league losing streak, stretching to 1957, is three games.

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TED S. WARREN / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jimmy Lake's first head coaching position will start in the midst of a pandemic as he takes over for Chris Petersen at Washington.

PAC-12'S STRANGE SPRINT MAY BE ESPECIALLY HARD ON NEW COACHES

By Jon Gold

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Welcome to the Season of the Strange, the Half-Year of the Weird, the West Coast Collision. Seven games in seven weeks, baby, a conference season at 1.5 speed. One heck of a sprint.

Pigskin in a pandemic. Can you believe it?

It's enough to make your head spin. A million-and-one questions. Everything feels out of focus.

So focus on the fact that three Pac-12 teams are breaking in new head coaches in the midst of utter chaos. Imagine that.

Imagine being Nick Rolovich, already reeling from trading the pristine coastline of Honolulu for the barren wasteland that is Pullman, Washington, and having to somehow follow the reign of Mike Leach. Imagine untangling that ball of fishing line. Where is he supposed to send Leach's 117 books about the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813? Or his study

on Kublai Khan's effects on the gentrification of outer Mongolia in 1292? What's he supposed to do with all the swords?

More importantly: What is he supposed to do with Washington State's offense, already tasked with replacing Anthony Gordon, the Pac-12's most prolific passer, and without an entire spring football campaign, to boot?

Or how about Jimmy Lake, who takes over for Chris Petersen at Washington after only two years as a full-time defensive coordinator? Lake, like Rolovich, is only 41 years old, presumably able to relate better with his players than coaches a full two decades older. But how well were they able to relate this summer on Zoom conferences?

And then there's Karl Dorrell, who, compared to Lake and Rolovich, might as well be a Pac-12 historian. The new Colorado coach both played and coached at UCLA, with previous assistant coaching stops at Arizona State,

Washington and with the Buffaloes. After Mel Tucker absconded to Michigan State, all Dorrell needs to do is provide a warm blanket and a kind smile. A bowl appearance would be nice, too, considering Colorado has gone 5-7 in three straight seasons after a 10-4 finish in 2016.

The Buffaloes aren't the only team in need of a jump-start, though.

Look no further than Tucson, where the Wildcats backslid from 5-7 to 4-8 in Kevin Sumlin's second season. Sumlin could've used a full season worth of competition to prove his staying power in the desert, but six games will have to suffice. Can the Noel Mazzone-Grant Gunnell connection emerge enough to save a handful of jobs? That's one big question.

Here's another: What in the world is going on with Chip Kelly? Inheriting a talented but sloppy UCLA roster from Jim Mora Jr., Kelly cleaned the cupboard of malcontents in a three-win debut

in 2018. He started restocking the shelves in 2019, improving by one win. At that rate, this year he gets to rearrange the cans of tomato sauce. And next year he'll cook. Who knows? All UCLA fans know — aside from annual abject frustration — is that they expected a lot more than seven wins in two years when Kelly started.

And seven wins is exactly what the cream of the Pac-12 crop is seeking this year, assuming there actually will be a conference championship to cap this short season. Oregon, USC and Utah are all in the running, even if each team has glaring needs to address, and little time to address them.

Will it be Tyler Shough or Boston College transfer Anthony Brown who assumes the starting quarterback role for Oregon, replacing the erstwhile Justin Herbert? Who is going to help shore up a USC defense that allowed an uncharacteristic 29.4 points per game last season, including 140 combined against Oregon and

2020 PAC-12 SCHEDULE

Start times and TV listings TBA, unless noted

Saturday

Arizona State at USC, 10 a.m. (Ch. 11)
 Arizona at Utah, 2 p.m. (ESPN)
 UCLA at Colorado, 5 p.m. (ESPN2)
 Stanford at Oregon, 5:30 p.m. (Ch. 9)
 Washington at Cal, 8:30 p.m. (ESPN)
 Washington State at Oregon State, 8:30 p.m. (Fox Sports 1)

Friday, Nov. 13

Utah at UCLA, 8:30 p.m. (Fox Sports 1)

Saturday, Nov. 14

Cal at Arizona State
 Colorado at Stanford
 Oregon at Washington State
 Oregon State at Washington
 USC at Arizona

Friday, Nov. 20

UCLA at Oregon, 8:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Saturday, Nov. 21

Arizona at Washington
 Arizona State at Colorado
 Cal at Oregon State
 USC at Utah
 Washington State at Stanford

Friday, Nov. 27

Oregon at Oregon State
 Stanford at Cal, 2 p.m. (Ch. 11)
 Washington at Washington State

Saturday, Nov. 28

Arizona at UCLA
 Colorado at USC
 Utah at Arizona State

Friday, Dec. 4

Washington State at USC

Saturday, Dec. 5

Colorado at Arizona
 UCLA at Arizona State
 Stanford at Washington
 Oregon at Cal
 Oregon State at Utah

Friday, Dec. 11

Arizona State at Arizona, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)
 Utah at Colorado, 7:30 p.m. (Fox Sports 1)

Saturday, Dec. 12

Cal at Washington State
 Oregon State at Stanford
 USC at UCLA
 Washington at Oregon

Friday, Dec. 18

Pac-12 Championship Game, time TBD (Ch. 11)

Saturday, Dec. 19

Conference games featuring non-divisional champions; pairings TBD.

UCLA in the regular season and Iowa in the Holiday Bowl? Can junior Devin Brumfield and sophomore Jordan Wilmore pair up to fill even one of Zack Moss' shoes at Utah, where the now-Buffalo Bills running back finished with a school-record 4,067 rushing yards and 38 touchdowns?

We've got a thousand more questions and about zero answers.

Which feels about right these days.



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ASU HAS TO ADJUST TO NEW OFFENSE, DEFENSE IN EDWARDS' THIRD SEASON

By John Marshall
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEMPE — Herm Edwards has changed perceptions about Arizona State football, both with wins on the field and victories on the recruiting trail.

To continue the upward trajectory, the Sun Devils will not only have to hit the ground running during the Pac-12's pandemic-shortened season, they'll have to adjust to new schemes on both sides of the ball without the benefit of spring football.

"Putting in a new offense and defense, as far as applying it, it's in but the retention of the players (isn't)," Edwards said. "That said, every week you're going to have a different plan of what you're going to do defensively and offensively. I'm just excited about seeing what it's going to look like."

Arizona State won seven games and played in a bowl game in 2018, exceeding outside expectations in its first season under Edwards, the former NFL player, coach and commentator.

The Sun Devils took another step last season, winning eight games and the Sun Bowl.

Arizona State has some talent back on offense this season, led by sophomore quarterback Jayden Daniels and senior receiver Frank Darby, but will have to replace running back Eno Benjamin. The defense is loaded on the back end despite the loss of All-Pac-12 cornerback Kobe Williams and the line will be anchored by Jermaine Lole, who had a team-high 6.5 sacks last season.

Edwards also made big inroads on the recruiting trail, adding talent across the roster with a top-25



Arizona State could compete for the Pac-12 South title with coach Herm Edwards and quarterback Jayden Daniels this season. The Sun Devils will be tested right off the bat with an early kickoff at USC in the season opener.

ARIZONA STATE'S 2020 SCHEDULE

Time and television are TBA, unless noted:

Date	Opponent	Time (TV)
Saturday	at USC	10 a.m. (Ch. 11)
Nov. 14	CAL	
Nov. 21	at Colorado	
Nov. 28	UTAH	
Dec. 5	UCLA	
Dec. 11 (Fri.)	at Arizona	5:30 p.m. (ESPN)
Dec. 18/19	TBA	

2020 class.

The key will be getting them all comfortable in new schemes.

Wanting to capitalize on Daniels' multiple talents, Edwards fired offensive co-

ordinator Rob Likens and brought in Zak Hill from Boise State to run the offense. Hill was adept at using multiple formations and personnel groups with the Broncos and Edwards is

hoping he can do the same in Tempe.

Arizona State moved former NFL linebacker Antonio Pierce and former Cincinnati Bengals coach Marvin Lewis into co-defensive coordinator roles this season after Danny Gonzales left for New Mexico.

Instead of the 3-5-5 defense the Sun Devils ran under Gonzales, they'll be in a pro-style 4-3 that should help some of the less-experienced linemen up front.

"I've got a pretty good idea of what it looks like on defense because I've been in this system numerous

times," Edwards said. "Offensively, it's very intriguing to me, kind of some things we're doing and how unfolds. I'm excited to watch it."

Dazzling Daniels: Daniels had a superb freshman season as Arizona State's starter, throwing for 2,748 yards and 17 touchdowns with two interceptions. The lanky, 6-foot-3 quarterback was adept at keeping plays alive with his legs and rushed for 319 yards and three TDs.

Daniels enters his sophomore season with plenty of hype, expected to be one of

the Pac-12's best quarterbacks.

"The thing I can't stress upon him enough is we can't get involved in the outside noises and the expectations that are all of a sudden put on (him)," Edwards said. "The playing part will take care of itself. I told him that I just want him to enjoy it. I want him to enjoy being a student-athlete and don't get caught up in anything else. Act like you're a freshman again. Just go out there and have fun with it."

Darby's turn: Arizona State will have a big hole at receiver to fill with Brandon Aiyuk playing in the NFL.

Darby could be the beneficiary.

The 6-1, 200-pound senior had 28 catches for 597 yards and eight TDs last season. He was the conference leader in yards per catch at 21.3 a year ago and figures to be Daniels' prime target this season.

Virus update: While the university saw a big uptick in COVID-19 cases with the start of classes, the football team has been vigilant under Edwards and his staff with no reported cases.

Schedule scramble: The Sun Devils lost two games that would have likely eased them into the season and built confidence with the rejiggered Pac-12 schedule, against Northern Arizona and UNLV. Arizona State lost what figured to be its first test of the season, a home game against BYU in Week 3.

Now, the Sun Devils will jump right into the flames with a 10 a.m. game (a new Pac-12 time slot) at USC. Arizona State also has road games against Colorado and rival Arizona, with home games against California, Utah and UCLA.

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MATT YORK / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arizona State quarterback Jayden Daniels starred as a true freshman in 2019, and is expected to be even better this fall.

ALL THE BIG QUESTIONS, TOP PLAYERS FOR WHAT WILL BE A ZANY PAC-12 SEASON

By Jon Gold

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Absolutely zany. Do any two words better sum up the state of the Pac-12 as it heads into its strangest season yet? From A to Z, things are going to be interesting in the conference. Take a look:

A IS FOR ADIOS: Say goodbye to Mike Leach and to Chris Petersen. Sayonara, Mel Tucker. Justin Herbert and Zack Moss and Laviska Shenault Jr.? All gone. This is a year of rebirth for the conference.

B IS FOR BUZZ: Or would it be L for lack of buzz? The Pac-12 only boasts two ranked teams, and it just feels like the conference is a complete afterthought as the last Power 5 conference to kick off. Will the Pac-12 be completely ignored this year? Or only mostly ignored, like usual?

C IS FOR CHIP: Much like his defensive coordinator, UCLA's Chip Kelly is on thin ice after a brutal start to his time in Westwood. He's 7-17. Did anyone expect that out of one of the conference's shiniest stars?

D IS FOR DORRELL: Back for Round 2 in the Pac-12, Karl Dorrell will be tasked with making Colorado fans forget about Mel Tucker in a hurry. Tucker bounced for Michigan State after just one season in Boulder, bewildering Buff backers on the way out. Dorrell, who found only moderate success at UCLA despite recruiting riches, has a tough gig ahead of him.

E IS FOR EVAN: Or, rather, E was for Evan? Cal's Evan Weaver exited last year after a conference-record 181 tackles, leaving a massive gap in the middle for the Bears. Look for Cameron Goode and Kuony Deng to fill the gap.

F IS FOR FORTUNATE: The chasm between the scheduling haves and have-nots is the Grand Canyon. Washington State must tangle with both USC and Oregon. So too will UCLA. But the Trojans and Ducks avoid each other, and thus, are scheduled to face no ranked teams.

G IS FOR GUNNELL: For Arizona fans, 2020 will be all about Grant Gunnell. After looking impressive last year in Khalil Tate's place, the pocket passer could thrive under offensive coordinator Noel Mazzone.

H IS FOR HERM: Arizona State has looked impressive with Herm Edwards at the helm. Are the Sun Devils ready to take another step behind the longtime NFLer?

I IS FOR IDENTITY: Is UCLA a quick-twitch, pass-happy offense under Chip Kelly? Will Wazzu still "Air Raid" it out in the absence of Mike Leach? Can Jimmy Lake install a more consistent defense in Washington? This is the season for several Pac-12 teams to establish an identity.

J IS FOR JAYDEN: Jayden Daniels wasn't perfect as a freshman for the Sun Devils, but he was close. A 17-to-2 touchdown-to-interception ratio as a freshman is remarkable. Can he build on it in this shortened season?



YOUNG KWAK / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington State hired Nick Rolovich away from Hawaii to replace Mike Leach.



ORLANDO RAMIREZ / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

USC quarterback Kedon Slovis threw for 30 touchdowns a year ago.



RON JENKINS / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oregon offensive lineman Penei Sewell was selected to The Associated Press preseason All-America first team before opting out of the season.

K IS FOR KEDON: If Jayden Daniels was dangerously efficient as a freshman, Kedon Slovis — a Scottsdale native — was equally as prolific for USC. Inheriting the keys to the potent USC offense upon J.T. Daniels' early season injury, Slovis threw

for 3,500 yards and 30 touchdowns with nine picks en route to conference offensive freshman of the year honors.

L IS FOR LAKE: Jimmy Lake takes over at Washington for Chris Petersen, who called it quits after

six seasons in Seattle. Lake came to U-Dub with Petersen after two years at Boise State, and he jumped from DB coach to co-defensive coordinator to defensive coordinator to head coach.

M IS FOR MURAO: Lake has one major box checked — stud young offensive lineman. Myles Murao is considered one of the top centers in the country, and he could be a fixture up front for the foreseeable future.

N IS FOR NONSTOP: One thing you've got to love about this strange Pac-12 football season — no bye weeks. Just seven weeks of madness. That'll do.

O IS FOR ODIGHIZUWA: UCLA needs someone to step up on the defensive side, and Osa Odighizuwa might just be the man for the job. The younger brother of former UCLA stud Owamagbe Odighizuwa isn't quite so little — he's 6 feet 2 inches and 279 pounds — but now is the time for him to make a real impact.

P IS FOR PENEI: There's only one way to watch Oregon's Penei Sewell this fall: YouTube, where a video about him — "Most Dominant College O-Lineman of the Decade" — has more than 175,000 views. Sewell has opted out because of the pandemic, but figures to be an NFL star, and soon.

Q IS FOR QUESTION: This whole list has been chock full of questions, because this may be the most perplexing season in Pac-12 history. It's not just a pandemic. It's Oregon in flux without Justin Herbert. It's USC trying to regain its reign. It's backs against the wall, and who's going to bounce from the brink.

R IS FOR ROLOVICH: Well, where do we begin? Nick Rolovich, a former Hawaii coach and player, arrives on the mainland with hopes of taking Washington State to even greater heights.

S IS FOR SUMLIN: The heat is on for Kevin Sumlin, who saw the Wildcats regress last year from 5-7 in 2018 to 4-8 and 2-7 in conference play last season. Those numbers are unacceptable for those Arizona fans desperate to turn around two decades of frustration.

T IS FOR TURK: A punter, on this coveted list? Considering Michael Turk might just change college football, maybe it's not so crazy. For the first time, the NCAA restored the eligibility of a player who declared for the NFL Draft, hired an agent and participated in the NFL Combine and draft. Turk wasn't selected, went unsigned, and petitioned to return to ASU. Shockingly, the NCAA relented.

U IS FOR UPSETS: Last year, ASU knocked off then-No. 15 Cal in Week 5; one week later, Stanford took out then-No. 15 Washington. Guess what happened the next week, when Oregon State hosted No. 15 Utah? The Utes won 52-7. Who'll pull off the upsets this year? Look out for Washington and Cal.

V IS FOR VERDELL: Yes, Justin Herbert may be in the NFL, cashing checks and torching defenses for the Chargers. But The Oregon Ducks aren't barren. In fact, they boast perhaps the conference's most electric player in running back C.J. Verdell, who rushed for 1,018 yards on 202 carries.

W IS FOR WALKER: Walker Little is, well, walking. Stanford's terrific offensive tackle has opted out of the season, one year after tearing his ACL in the first game of the 2019 season. The former all-conference and freshman co-offensive player of the year could have really helped a Stanford team breaking in a new QB.

X IS FOR XAVIER: Incoming Utah defensive end Xavier Carlton is a 6-6 specimen, the latest in the Utes' long lineage up front.

Y IS FOR YOUTH MOVEMENT: Carlton isn't the only other new stud on the block. Between Oregon linebackers Justin Flowe (No. 6 overall prospect) and Noah Sewell (No. 13), USC wideout Gary Bryant Jr. (No. 46 overall prospect), Utah cornerback Clark Phillips III (No. 51) and Washington wideout Jalen McMillan (No. 67), a new crop of Pac-12 prodigies is ready to shine.

Z IS FOR ZANY: This is the weirdest season on record. Off-again, on-again. Coaching changes. Seven games?! Buckle up for a weird and wild ride.

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE PAC-12, FROM ARIZONA TO WASHINGTON STATE

By Jon Gold

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR



ARIZONA WILDCATS

- **2019 record:** 4-8, 2-7 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Kevin Sumlin (9-15 in third season at Arizona, 95-58 in 12 seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Arizona Stadium (50,782 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Grant Gunnell, WR Brian Casteel, WR Jamarie Joiner, OT Donovan Laie, DE Jalen Harris, DB Lorenzo Burns
- **Warmup acts:** DL Regen Terry, RB Jalen John
- **Punchlines:** Arizona has winnable tilts in back-to-back weeks at UCLA (Nov. 28) and hosting Colorado (Dec. 5)
- **Hecklers:** Is there a tougher slate to open the Pac-12 than the Cats' 1-2 punch at Utah (Nov. 7) and hosting USC (Nov. 14)?
- **Gag reel:** Arizona has been the punching bag of the Pac-12 for going on two decades. A startling fact for Wildcat fans: Arizona has lost more league games than any other conference team since 2000. Yikes. Last year, Arizona reeled off four straight wins — including wins over UCLA and at Colorado — before the wheels came off. The Cats will need to get more from an offense that averaged nine points over the final three games last year.



UCLA quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson runs past Colorado linebacker Nate Landman during the first half of a game in Pasadena, California, last year. Thompson-Robinson is returning for his third season at quarterback.

- **Punchlines:** The Ducks may have the softest schedule in the country, if not the conference. Oregon's lone matchup with a Pac-12 South squad is UCLA — a gift from the scheduling gods.
- **Hecklers:** There isn't a blip in the bunch. At Wazzu? Never fun. At Corvallis? A test. But Oregon is set up for a big year — or, at least, a big half-year.
- **Gag reel:** The Ducks lose a ton of talent from last season's terrific squad — most noticeably quarterback Justin Herbert, defensive stud Troy Dye and four offensive line starters — but Cristobal brought in a top-tier recruiting class.

OREGON STATE BEAVERS



- **2019 record:** 5-7, 4-5 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Jonathan Smith (7-17 in third season at Oregon State, 7-17 in two seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Reser Stadium (43,643 capacity)
- **Headliners:** RB Jermar Jefferson, WR Trevon Bradford, OL Brandon Kipper, LB Hamlicar Rashed Jr., LB Omar Speights, DL Isaac Hodgins, DB David Morris
- **Warmup acts:** ATH Isaiah Newell, QB Chance Nolan, DB Alton Julian, DB Rejohn Wright, QB Ben Gulbranson
- **Punchlines:** Oregon State opens the season with their neighbors to the north, as Washington State comes to town before a tussle with the Huskies. Win two straight and they could look at their first .500 season in ages.
- **Hecklers:** If the home-state Ducks have the easiest schedule in the conference, OSU might have the hardest. First off, Oregon doesn't play itself, but the Beavers do. Also, the one Pac-12 South foe in the abbreviated season is a test at Utah, never easy.
- **Gag reel:** Coming off a promising five-win season, the Beavers will look to take another step forward despite having to replace the passing prowess of quarterback Jake Luton and stud wideout Isaiah Hodgins, who left Corvallis early for NFL riches.



ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

- **2019 record:** 8-5, 4-5 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Herm Edwards (15-11 in third season at Arizona State, 15-11 in 2 seasons overall)
- **Stage:** Sun Devil Stadium (53,599 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Jayden Daniels, WR Frank Darby, OL Dohnovan West, DL Jermaine Lole, LB Merlin Robertson, DB

- Jack Jones, P Michael Turk
- **Warmup acts:** RB Daniyel Ngata, RB DeaMonte Traynum, WR LV Bunkley-Shelton, ATH Alijah Badger, WR Johnny Wilson
- **Punchlines:** Arizona State will look to end its season on a high note with December clashes against UCLA and at Arizona.
- **Hecklers:** The Sun Devils could get a rude awakening to the season, and it'll come early: ASU travels to USC for a 10 a.m. tilt with the No. 21 Trojans on Saturday.
- **Gag reel:** Just when the Sun Devils started opening some eyes with a 5-1 start, including two top-20 wins in three weeks, Herm's crew lost four straight, including embarrassing mid-season losses to UCLA and Oregon State. If ASU can avoid hitting the skids, Edwards can continue to build on his already-prom-

ising start.



CAL GOLDEN BEARS

- **2019 record:** 8-5, 4-5 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Justin Wilcox (20-18 in fourth season at Cal, 20-18 in three seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** California Memorial Stadium (82,467 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Chase Garbers, RB Christopher Brown Jr., WR Nikko Remigio, OL Michael Saffell, OL Jake Curhan, LB Kuony Deng, LB Cameron Goode.
- **Warmup acts:** TE D'Andre Rogers, RB Chris Street, WR Jeremiah Hunter, DB Dejuan Butler
- **Punchlines:** Cal has a forgiving early schedule — if Washington rolls over in Week 1 like it did last year — with ASU, Cal and Stanford in Weeks 2-4.
- **Hecklers:** The Bears could be 4-0 before they host No. 14 Oregon on Dec. 5.
- **Gag reel:** Wilcox is known as a terrific defensive coach, so it's no surprise that the Bears held nine teams to under 21 points last year. But that Cal offense — woof. The Bears ranked second-worst among Power 5 teams in offensive efficiency.

- (0-0 in first season at Colorado, 35-27 in 5 seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Folsom Field (50,183 capacity)
- **Headliners:** RB Alex Fontenot, WR K.D. Nixon, TE Brady Russell, OL William Sherman, DL Antonio Alfano, LB Nate Landman
- **Warmup acts:** QB Brendon Lewis, RB Ashaad Clayton, DE Jason Harris, S Christian Gonzalez, OL Jake Wray
- **Punchlines:** The Buffaloes have a chance to get off on the right foot with UCLA and a road test at Stanford to open the season.
- **Hecklers:** Utah comes to Boulder on Dec. 11 for the Rumble in the Rockies, which the Utes dominated, 45-15, last year.
- **Gag reel:** Mel Tucker talked a big game and had the Buffalo faithful ready to run through a wall for him...then promptly bounced for Michigan State after one season. In comes Dorrell, whose previous head-coaching stint in the Pac-12 — at UCLA from 2003-2007 — was a bust.



OREGON DUCKS

- **2019 record:** 12-2, 8-1 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Mario Cristobal (21-7 in third season at Oregon, 48-54 in nine seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Autzen Stadium (55,675 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Tyler Slough, RB CJ Verdell, WR Johnny Johnson, TE Cam McCormick, DL Kayvon Thibodeaux, LB Issac Slade-Matautia.
- **Warmup acts:** LB Justin Flowe, LB Noah Sowell, DB Dontae Manning, QB Jay Butterfield

See PAC-12, C15



COLORADO BUFFALOES

- **2019 record:** 5-7, 3-6 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Karl Dorrell

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PAC-12

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STANFORD CARDINAL

- **2019 record:** 4-8, 3-6 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** David Shaw (86-34 in 10th season at Stanford, 86-34 in nine seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Stanford Stadium (50,424 capacity)
- **Headliners:** RB Austin Jones, OL Drew Dalman, WR Simi Fehoko, LB Ricky Miezan
- **Warmup acts:** OL Myles Hinton, WR John Humphreys, OL Levi Rogers, OL Connor McLaughlin
- **Punchlines:** Daunting road tasks at Cal and Washington are sandwiched by winnable home tilts with Washington State and Oregon State.
- **Hecklers:** Well, someone had to open up with Oregon. The Ducks host the Cardinal on Nov. 7, and while the rest of the schedule is forgiving, a bad start can linger.
- **Gag reel:** Is the shine off David Shaw's program? Slipping to 4-8 — its worst season in more than a decade — Stanford doesn't have the talent to retool quickly. Worse, the recruiting up front on both sides is nowhere near what it once was.



Coach David Shaw, center, is in his 10th season at Stanford. Shaw's team will open its seven-game, conference-games-only season at Oregon on Nov. 7. The Cardinal in 86-34 under Shaw.

- **Warmup acts:** LB Damian Sellers, QB Parker McQuarrie, WR Logan Loya, LB Jonathan Vaughns
- **Punchlines:** The Bruins' season might be decided in a two-game swing against the Arizona schools, as the Wildcats come to the Rose Bowl on Nov. 28 and UCLA travels to Tempe a week later.
- **Hecklers:** Sandwiching those two games are matchups with Oregon and USC. Good luck with that.
- **Gag reel:** It's show-me time for Kelly, who has lost more than twice as many games as he's won in Westwood and now faces scrutiny over expenses. A Los Angeles Times report last month showed that the Bruins spent \$5.4 million for non-travel-related meals last year. No other Pac-12 team spent more than \$1.2 million.



UCLA BRUINS

- **2019 record:** 4-8, 4-5 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Chip Kelly (7-17 in third season at UCLA, 53-24 in six seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Rose Bowl (92,542 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Dorian Thompson-Robinson, RB Demetric Felton, WR Kyle Philips, OL Jake Burton, DL Osa Odighizuwa, DB Obi Eboh



USC TROJANS

- **2019 record:** 8-5, 7-2 in Pac-12 play

- **Head booker:** Clay Helton (40-22 in sixth season at USC, 40-22 in five seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Los Angeles Coliseum (55,675 capacity)
- **Headliners:** QB Kedon Slovis, RB Vavae Malepeai, WR Tyler Vaughns, WR Amon-Ra St. Brown, OL Aljahjeh Vera-Tucker, DE Drake Jackson, DB Talanoa Hufanga
- **Warmup acts:** WR Gary Bryant Jr., OL Jonah Monheim, DL Tuli Tuipulotu, WR Josh Jackson
- **Punchlines:** Much like Oregon, USC has a cupcake schedule that should put it in prime position to improve on a No. 21 ranking. Opening with the Arizona schools bodes well.
- **Hecklers:** The lone Pac-12 North opponent on the schedule — Washington State — doesn't have the horses to keep up with the Trojans, but with Mike Leach off to Mississippi State, it'll be an entirely new look.
- **Gag reel:** After a stunning 5-7 campaign in 2018, the Trojans bounced back to go 8-5 last year, but 8-5 doesn't cut it for USC faithful. Clay Helton's seat remains warm, but the soft schedule could cool it down.



UTAH UTES

- **2019 record:** 11-3, 8-1 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Kyle Whittingham (131-63 in 15th season at Arizona, 86-43 in 14 seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Rice-Eccles Stadium (45,807 capacity)
- **Headliners:** TE Brant Kuithe, WR Britain Covey, DL Mika Tafua, DB Bronson Boyd, LB Devin Lloyd
- **Warmup acts:** DB Clark Phillips III, DE Van Fillinger, DE Xavier Carlton, S Nate Richie, TE Connor O'Toole
- **Punchlines:** With Oregon State serving as patsy, err, the Utes' sole Pac-12 North foe, things are looking up for Utah. Closing out the campaign with Oregon State and at Colorado is a plus.
- **Hecklers:** Lucky for Utah, the lone beast in the offing is USC, and the Trojans come to SLC in Week 3.
- **Gag reel:** After climbing to No. 5 in the country and 11-1 on the season, the Utes crashed

in back-to-back losses to Oregon (in the Pac-12 title game) and Texas (in the Alamo Bowl). It'll be a tall task to reach the same heights, but Whittingham has the chops to get the Utes past last year's disappointment.



WASHINGTON HUSKIES

- **2019 record:** 8-5, 4-5 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Jimmy Lake (0-0 in first season at Washington, 0-0 in zero seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Husky Stadium (70,083 capacity)
- **Headliners:** RB Richard Newton, OL Jaxson Kirkland, OL Luke Watterberg, TE Cade Otton, DB Elijah Molden, DB Cam Williams
- **Warmup acts:** DE Sav'ell Smalls, WR Jalen McMillan, OL Myles Murao, QB Ethan Garbers, OL Roger Rosengarten
- **Punchlines:** Weeks 2-5 could prove fruitful for the Huskies, who host Oregon State, Arizona and Stanford — while

traveling just up the road for the Apple Cup against Wazzu — in the month-long stretch.

- **Hecklers:** If the middle of the schedule is kind to Washington, the two ends are less forgiving, as the Huskies open at Cal and close at Oregon.
- **Gag reel:** Chris Petersen is out, having failed to lift U-Dub to the heights once expected after he dominated at Boise State. In comes former defensive coordinator Jimmy Lake. Can Lake get the Huskies back to the Pac-12 elite? That's the task.



WASHINGTON STATE COUGARS

- **2019 record:** 6-7, 3-6 in Pac-12 play
- **Head booker:** Nick Rolovich (0-0 in first season at Washington State, 28-27 in four seasons overall)
- **Stage time:** Martin Stadium (32,952 capacity)
- **Headliners:** RB Max Borghi, WR Tay Martin, WR Renard Bell, OL Liam Ryan, OL Abraham Lucas, LB Justus Rogers, DB Skyler Thomas, DB Derrick Langford
- **Warmup acts:** QB Jayden de Laura, DB Alphonse Oywak, WR Joey Hobert, OL James McNorton
- **Punchlines:** Rolovich could have a tough sledding as there aren't many easy matchups on the slate. A Week 1 showing with Oregon State at least gives the Cougs a chance to start the season on a winning note.
- **Hecklers:** Washington State is one of just a couple of Pac-12 teams to contend with multiple ranked teams. The Cougars will host Oregon and head to USC, luckily with two games in between.
- **Gag reel:** Mike Leach is gone, and he took his giant sword and caustic personality with him to Mississippi State. Can Rolovich provide a breath of fresh air for Wazzu? He comes after a four-year stint in Hawaii.



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