

RINGO: Plenty to look forward to at Pac-12 media day

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Football season is here.

Sure, it's still mid-July, the middle of baseball season and you probably haven't even bought the kids their back-to-school clothes yet, but trust me, football season has arrived.

As a college football beat writer, you mark the start of each season with a trip to the media day or days hosted by the conference in which your team plays. I'm off to Fox Studios in Los Angeles on Monday for the first Pac-12 Conference media day on Tuesday.

That's right -- 12 teams, 24 coaches and players crammed into one day. Should be fun.

The league will release its media poll predicting where the scribes and talking heads believe each team will finish. Colorado coach Jon Embree and senior quarterback Tyler Hansen will be there representing the Buffs and probably talking a lot about surprising people.

Just a guess here, but based on everything I've read and heard throughout the offseason around the conference, I'd be surprised if the Buffs were picked better than fifth in the south division. Not much respect for these Buffs after five losing seasons. They're going to have to earn it.

Colorado and Utah are the new schools in the conference and what they have to say about their prospects for this season and their new surroundings certainly will be one item of interest. Here are a handful of other moments or interviews I'm looking forward to.

Andrew Luck's beard: Have you seen this thing? The Heisman Trophy favorite looks like he's been grinding through six weeks of NHL playoffs. He has turned himself into a giant leprechaun. Perhaps you saw him being interviewed on ESPN by former Florida coach Urban Meyer and thought it was another Geico caveman commercial. Not sure why Luck chose to stick with facial hair. Maybe it's just an offseason thing for him. Quoting my wife here, "The Heisman Trophy winner can't be all scraggly looking."

The Oregon inquest: The scandal surrounding the Oregon program's connection with a Texas-based recruiting service has been one of the hot topics of the offseason. Oregon coach Chip Kelly has stupidly delayed answering questions about it from the media thereby guaranteeing his experience Tuesday will be more like a grand jury proceeding than a press conference. Instead of reporters wanting to know about the keys to his no-huddle offense or who his starting middle linebacker will be, Kelly will be pressed on what he knew and when he knew it. I'm sure he will try to avoid the questions, but that tactic rarely succeeds.

What say the Utes?: Utah coach Kyle Whittingham is as likable as they come and seems like the least likely coach to say anything that might get fans of another program mad at him. Utah and Colorado have been paired on rivalry weekend at the end of the regular season and there already has been a lot of talk about whether the two programs will eventually become rivals. Maybe we can pry something inflammatory from him to stoke the fire a bit.

Baiting Mike Stoops: A source tells me the quickest way to get under a coach's skin in the Pac-12 is by approaching Arizona's Mike Stoops and mentioning something about rules favoring the offense. Stoops is a defensive mind and apparently is pretty passionate about so much of the game being geared toward offensive success these days.

A few moments with Larry Scott: At some point Tuesday, you know the Pac-12 commissioner is going lean back against a wall and admire the monster he has created by expanding to 12 teams and negotiating the richest conference television deal in the history of college sports. To this point, Scott always seems to be one step ahead of most, and it wouldn't surprise me if he kicks things off Tuesday by announcing a new television partner for the conference's network.

USC coach Lane Kiffin: Let's face it, this guy has been a train wreck waiting to happen since he was introduced as head coach at Tennessee a few years ago and it continued when he bolted back to the West Coast last year. Whether he is

falsely accusing rivals of cheating or offering scholarships to 12 year olds, he always seems to be intriguing. I'm sure he will provide some good moments, but no pressure or anything. His players already embarrassed the program this summer on TMZ.

Coaches' on the hot seat: I've spent the past two years covering a team with an unpopular coach. It's not fun, but it makes for some interesting theater. I'm not sure the fans of UCLA and Washington State have completely abandoned coaches Rick Neuheisel and Paul Wulff, the way CU fans had given up on Dan Hawkins before last season, but both are definitely on short leashes this fall.

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