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An interview with:

COMMISSIONER SCOTT

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Thank you, Dave. Good morning, everyone. I'm delighted to welcome you to the 2014 Pac-12 Football Media Day. I'd like to thank everyone for being here. Thank you for your coverage of the Pac-12, and I'd especially like to thank our staff and the folks here at Paramount Studios for putting on such a fantastic setting for this football media day, Hollywood and the Pac-12. We're here at a Hollywood Studio for the fourth year in a row for our football media day. Hollywood, the entertainment capital of the world.

This year we'll also be playing our football championship game in Silicon Valley, the innovation capitol of the world. Innovation, entertainment, this is part of the DNA of the Pac-12 Conference, uniquely West Coast, combined with the leading academic and athletic higher education institutions in the world. This is home for the Pac-12.

So we thank you all for being here for what we know will be a very exciting day. I want to start by welcoming two newcomers to the Pac-12 football coaching community, Chris Petersen at University of Washington, and Steve Sarkisian who is moving down from Washington to USC and starting his tenure there. We wish them both good luck, and we know they're going to do great in the Conference.

I'd like to thank all of the staff from the schools that are here. They do such a great job with our Universities. Being part of the Pac-12, there is an incredibly high bar, and this past season proved it yet again. Last year across the Pac-12, our Conference proved yet again why we are known and have been known as the Conference of Champions. We won 10 NCAA Championships this past season. This is the ninth year in a row that our Conference has won more NCAA Championships than any other conference, bringing the total number of NCAA Championships in the Pac-12 to 469, far surpassing any other conference in the country.

We at the Pac-12 pride ourselves on its athletic excellence and academic excellence, but also being leaders, progressive leaders, on the field and off, as well. This season with unparalleled strength and depth we are playing the toughest schedule of any conference in the country, and we'll be hosting our football championship in the heart of Silicon Valley at the new Levi's® Stadium.

Off the field we continue to lead the way in terms of our student-athlete health initiatives and making sure our fans get the best possible experience. Pac-12 Networks is also a hot bed of innovation for using the latest state-of-the-art technology. They'll be broadcasting 850 live sporting events from the Pac-12 on television this year, far more than any conference television network. Also, our chancellors continue to provide leadership nationally on all the issues surrounding NCAA reform and our desire to do more for student-athletes.

I want to talk to you today about all of these things, but let's start by talking about the main reason we're here today, Pac-12 football. Pac-12 football is in a terrific position. As I reflect on the transformation that's happened in this Conference over the last few years, it's remarkable. Last season really highlighted just how far we've come. Last season our Conference recorded the most non-conference wins in our history with 31. We posted a 6-3 record against non-conference competition with the Big Ten, ACC and SEC. And throughout the season, we had four or five teams ranked in the top 25 most of the season, even two in the top five some weeks during the year.

As for depth, this is really something we've seen a dramatic improvement in the Conference. We had a record nine teams qualify for bowl games last season, the most in our history.

Put simply, our Conference has never been stronger or deeper than it is today, and it's why I'm filled with so much optimism as we look forward to this upcoming season. This coming season, the Pac-12 features an impressive number of potential Heisman Trophy winners along with, again, an exceptional core of quarterbacks, part of

the signature of the Pac-12. In fact, 10 of our 12 schools have returning quarterbacks as starters and on average our teams have 15 returning starters. This suggests it's going to be another exceptional year for Pac-12 football, and it also says something about the quality and continuity of our programs and the great work our coaches do.

Our coaches, in my opinion, are the best in the country. Our schools are making huge commitments to developing their facilities and our national brand is growing thanks to the incredible exposure we get from ESPN, FOX, and the new availability of the Pac-12 Networks. And for the first time ever, our Conference race is going to culminate with a neutral site championship game. On December 5th, we'll welcome the best of the Pac-12 North against the best from the South to compete at Levi's® Stadium in Santa Clara for the Pac-12 Football Championship Game. This is going to be an amazing opportunity for our fans as well. This stadium is the epitome of West Coast innovation, progressiveness, and a focus on fans.

That said, we are there because it makes a statement about what the Pac-12 stands for. It's in the heart of the Conference, and it really reflects the priorities for the Pac-12. I simply can't imagine a better home for any football championship game than this Levi's® Stadium.

Of course, I'm optimistic that the winner of that Pac-12 Football Championship Game will be one of the four teams competing in the new College Football Playoff. Very proud and pleased that finally college football has a playoff. After years of debate and frustration, we have been able to find a way to firmly establish a real playoff in college football and settle matters on the field. And we've been able to do so while preserving the very important American bowl tradition. This is particularly important for the Pac-12 given our amazing historical relationship with the Rose Bowl. So we've been able to arrange for a playoff and still preserve the importance of the Rose Bowl and our other bowl games. The Pac-12 will still be an annual partner in the Granddaddy of them all and they'll have a chance to participate in the College Football Playoff as a semifinal game once every few years.

Bottom line, the establishment of a playoff is a great development for the Pac-12. I think it's going to be great news for us and our teams and the access we have to compete on the field for national championships more frequently.

The other thing I'm particularly excited about in terms of the shape of the playoffs is the importance that strength of schedule will play. We know that there will be continued controversy and

debate, but the clear statement has been made that strength of schedule is going to be a determining factor in figuring out which of the four teams ought to be competing in that playoff. This year the Pac-12, again, has scheduled a very tough non-conference slate that includes 13 games against bowl teams from a year ago. Highlights of our non-conference match-ups this year include five games against Big Ten opponents – Michigan, Michigan State, Northwestern, Rutgers and Illinois. We've got three games against Notre Dame this year – Stanford, USC, Arizona State all playing against Notre Dame, and of course UCLA's match-up in Dallas against Texas early in the season.

Here it is with the most competitive nine-game conference schedule in the nation, our champion will be incredibly well-positioned in this first-ever historic College Football Playoff.

The choice of Levi's® Stadium, as I said, speaks volumes in terms of the importance we've placed on the fan experience and fan engagement. Since I began as commissioner, we had a significant transformation in terms of our Conference office and the capabilities of our staff. We've taken important steps to improve attendance and the fan experience across the conference, working really closely with our schools but by hiring experts in marketing, operation, ticket sales, to work with our schools, provide leadership and share best practice. These are leaders in our office that come from the NBA, the NFL, Major League Baseball. There is much more to do, especially with the entire sports world focused and grappling with the changes to fan behavior and how we're going to keep fans coming to our stadium as behaviors change and demands on fans' time continue to be greater.

In typical fashion with the opportunities and challenges, and the great advantage we have being on the West Coast and Silicon Valley, in the epicenter of innovation, and use of technology to improve entertainment. So we are embracing this challenge and providing leadership. We've got really important partnerships we've put in place over the last 12 months. First with AT&T, our most comprehensive partnership, not only involving distribution of our network, and the official telecommunications sponsor of all 12 of our schools and a major championship. But an important part of this relationship is how we are going to innovate and use technology to enhance the experience for fans and improve connectivity at all of our stadiums.

We've teamed up not with just AT&T, but

with Sporting Innovations out of Kansas City that are considered innovative among Major League Soccer in using technology to improve the fan experience. Working with AT&T, Sporting Innovations and Stanford, we're launching a pilot this year. We're working with Stanford for 2014 football season to show what the future of the fan experience and fan engagement might look like.

They'll be partners on board along the way. There will be a lot of great successes with this pilot and a lot of things that we'll learn along the way. But we're past the discussion stage, study phase or relying on anyone else on embracing these challenges given the connection that we've got with technology and innovation here in the west. As part of the pilot that many of you had hoped for, we'll get a chance to attend a Stanford football game this year, and you'll see a new mobile app we're developing with Stanford and our partners that allows all kinds of new venue information, video highlights connecting to the Pac-12 Networks where we control all of that content, and other fan-friendly innovations. It will also provide fans convenient tools to share comments and real-time feedback. This will be a multi-year project that we're embarking on with the first major step this year.

Another component of our engagement with fans is, of course, the Pac-12 Networks. The fact that our 12 universities own and control this network ourselves, we have the direct relationship with fans. Tomorrow on this podium you'll hear from Pac-12 Networks president Lydia Murphy-Stephans who will have a lot of important things to say about the progress that Pac-12 Networks is making in distribution, including some key milestones we'll be passing for this upcoming football season. She'll also talk about some great new football programming that we have, more behind-the-scenes access than we've ever seen before, and a lot that we're doing with digital content and making our content available online and through mobile devices as well.

She'll also talk about the important role Pac-12 Networks plays as part of our educational mission. We have, there is a central reason we created and felt like we wanted to own and control the Pac-12 Networks so we could integrate it in terms of the educational mission of our universities. We envisioned it not just as a great way to reach fans and give exposure for our schools, but to integrate what we're doing at the conference level with our classrooms. We have over 2,000 paid interns that are either college students or graduates from Pac-12 schools that are working for the Pac-12 Network, either in front

of the camera or behind the camera. Very proud of their accomplishments and this is a really special part of what we do at the Pac-12 Networks.

Just as the Pac-12 Networks was designed to focus on our fans and support our institutions, there is a lot that we're doing around our student-athletes. This is the core of what we do and focusing on student-athlete welfare and health is central to our priorities. In health and safety, we've taken a leadership role by creating the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Research Program, including a head trauma task force. For the next three years, our Conference has committed 3.5 million dollars per year to invest in research just around student-athlete health with a heavy emphasis on head trauma.

The collaborative research that will be funded through this program will take place on our campuses through the collection of data, sharing of some of the new research. This will benefit our schools and something all of our schools can collaborate in. And I want to express appreciation for all the representatives of our universities for participating in this important initiative.

The collaboration, of course, extends beyond our Conference. We're working very closely with the NCAA and other conferences to achieve consensus on medical care for student-athletes, and the diagnosis in managements of concussions. I'm especially proud that Pac-12 leadership in collaboration with our coaches led to the recently announced NCAA Best Practices for Football content. The consensus was reached across the country, but those standards largely mirror what the Pac-12 implemented last year and we'll work very closely with the NCAA and our peer conferences to try to push the envelope in terms of what we're doing to understand concussions and have a safer, healthier environment for student-athletes.

Besides the responsibility to insure the health and welfare of our student-athletes, we also remain entirely committed to mission to provide students with the best education possible. Year-in and year-out, the pillar of who we are as a conference isn't just the athletic excellence that we talked about earlier today. It's the academic excellence of our student-athletes. Take Washington's Megan Kufeld, a soccer player that had a 3.96 GPA this year in her major, molecular biology. This past academic year, Megan received the prestigious University of Washington's President's Medal for High Scholarship, it's an award honored to the top undergraduate student at UW. Not the top student-athlete, the top student,

bar none. And she accomplished this while being the goalkeeper for the Huskies women's soccer team and having 88 saves and serving on the Student-Athlete Advisory Council. I raise Megan because she's just one of the many examples that I see day-in and day-out of the tremendous accomplishment of our student-athletes and how their athletic achievements are a small part of what they are developing in terms of their education and life skills while in school.

It's also the underpinning of a really important new initiative for the conference this year that will be talked about over the next couple days that will shine a light on some of the academic achievements of our student-athletes who are excelling in majors such as science, technology, engineering and math, known in many circles as the STEM majors. Pac-12 Networks will produce video profile of student-athletes that are excelling in these STEM majors and it's going to air on the Pac-12 Networks. We are initiating this effort as part of a brand-new partnership we're announcing today with Chevron. Chevron, one of the largest employers in the state of California, a leader in innovation themselves, has been hugely supportive of many of our universities and they're underpinning this effort to bring to light these great stories of our student-athletes and their academic achievement through the Pac-12 Networks.

One of the profiled student-athletes is here today at the Pac-12 Football Media Day. Not just because of his skill at quarterback will be part of this Chevron STEM initiative, but we also want to celebrate his academic achievements in the field of science. Oregon's Marcus Mariota recently passed up a chance to go to the NFL undoubtedly as a high draft choice, because he wanted to stay at Oregon and earn his degree. We believe that encouraging our student-athletes to tackle challenging majors such as Marcus is in, even with the demands made on their time by their sports is critical, especially at a time when so much of our economy, especially in the Pac-12 footprint is focused on technological innovation, science, math and engineering.

Take a look at the video featuring Marcus to give you a sense of what we're going to be doing on the network this year.

(Video playing.)

So thank you, Chevron, for enabling us to do the work to bring many of these stories to life. Marcus is just one example of student-athletes that get an awful lot of attention for what they do on the field and the courts and doing incredible things in the classroom and their communities as well. And that is the focus of this program.

I myself thought that I'd be standing here today, if it wasn't for this intertwining of the role between athletics and academics. As captain of the Harvard tennis team, what I learned to love about leadership is teamwork, the same way that Marcus and many of our student-athletes are having a chance to blend an incredible education with the chance to compete at the highest level athletically as well. Most of all, they're all learning to persevere through wins and losses and having tremendous access in their life.

Now this is the narrative that is out there in the public. We know we face tremendous challenges in terms of focus not only in the stories you just saw examples of, but in other stories from college athletics. But from my vantage point, college athletics is working exceedingly well. I can speak from our Conference's perspective, and I see the hugely beneficial, often transformative experience, of being a student-athlete in the Pac-12. It's providing for 7,000 student-athletes that participate in intercollegiate athletics in the Pac-12 every year. College sports is providing an avenue in the game and in elite education that some people might not have had a chance to get. Research shows that over 20% of student-athletes are first generation attendees of college, and a similar percentage, as we poll these student-athletes, say that they never would have attended college had it not been for intercollegiate athletics and the opportunity they had or the financial support that they received.

In the Pac-12 alone, student-athletes are receiving \$126 million in scholarship money every year. Think about the difference that is making in the lives of young men and women that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to go to the caliber of schools or to go to school at all, without that financial support.

Take the case of Lizette Salas, a former standout golfer at USC who is the first person in her family to go to college. A daughter of Mexican immigrants, Lizette was often told she could never make it to college, but college sports and an opportunity at USC and the Pac-12 provided her that passion. She shared her story recently in front of some of her peers at commencement in 2011.

Or a football player, in the case of Jeremiah Allison who grew up in inner city L.A., he lost his mother before she could see him in a Cougar uniform. He told us that his financial scholarship gives him a sense of financial and personal security that he never felt before. With plans to pursue law school after he's done playing football for Washington State, Jeremiah's future

look a lot more promising than if the scholarship had not been available to him.

For all the good that college sports is doing, we also know there are some significant challenges out there, and we know it's time to make significant changes. While today requires that we do more for student-athletes who work so hard to balance their passions for their sport while still wanting to get an education.

While I understand the concern of my colleagues that's been expressed, we've heard some doomsday and some threats over the last week, I am very confident and optimistic about where college sports is going and some of the recent reforms that we're seeing.

The time has come to make changes and changes are coming. After years of debate and discussion, both within college sports and in many areas outside of the world of college sports, a clear consensus has emerged that change is needed. Thanks to the engagement of many people involved in our schools, but particularly our presidents and chancellors that stepped out and laid out a bold agenda going forward, we are at the precipice of making some very important changes in college sports that focus on the primacy of the academic need for balance to provide much more financial and other support for student-athletes. The Pac-12 presidents and chancellors outline steps we want to take to bring college sports into the modern era. It leaves no doubt there is no time for incrementalism, we need to be progressive, we need to be bold. We need to make changes now.

Many of you have seen the letters that our presidents wrote, and I won't go through all the details of it. But the focus was on meeting the needs of student-athletes, including permissible coverage of college attendance, strengthening the focus on academics, and restoring some balance in terms of the time demands that student-athletes have, and facilitating increased educational opportunities for student-athletes who interrupt their education to play professional sports or otherwise interrupted to make sure they have the financial support to come back and finish their degrees.

Promoting and protecting student-athlete health and safety, and integrating student-athletes into the broader campus experience and the overall academic mission, these are some of the headlines and some of the priorities that were stressed by Pac-12 presidents, and I'm very encouraged with what's recently been put out by the NCAA board's Hearing Committee in terms of their proposal that's going to the NCAA board of directors on August 7th.

There has been a lot of compromise. There's been a lot of give-and-take, but I feel confident that the five conferences are going to get the autonomy and flexibility we've been asking for to be more nimble and to make some important changes that benefit student-athletes.

I encourage you in the media to focus your attention on these important issues and the changes that are being made and resist the temptation to oversimplify these issues simply about student-athletes and campaigns to become employees or to professionalize college athletics. What's involved here, from my perspective, and what's at stake is much more. Like some of the stories we've talked about this morning, there is an amazing amount of access that is provided for 7,000 student-athletes in this Conference every year. Many of whom, most of whom, use sports as a vehicle to go on and be successful in something else other than their sport in life. It would be a real shame from my perspective if the focus on a very small sliver of athletes that fortunately are able to go on to be successful in professional football or professional basketball, and brings a radical solution that fundamentally changes the collegiate model and reduces access to the vast majority of student-athletes that are gaining this benefit.

A few stats for you: Only 2% of Pac-12 student-athletes will be drafted by the NFL. Only 3% of Pac-12 basketball student-athletes go on to play in the NBA. The fact is, almost all of the 7,000 Pac-12 student-athletes are never going to play professional sports or certainly not long enough to actually make a living at it.

My focus is on the vast majority, that 97 or 98% of our student-athletes for whom this experience of being a student-athlete in the Pac-12 is transformative. It's providing access, providing opportunity, that's going to allow them to be more successful in life than they would have otherwise. We have to do right for these student-athletes and not design a system around the 2%.

In our Conference in particular, this is a very ripe issue. Our Conference sponsors 22 sports as a conference, and amongst our schools we have 36 varsity sports being played amongst our schools. The collegiate model is working for the vast majority of student-athletes and for our schools. We need to make necessary reforms and we will. But radically changing the collegiate model into a professional model or trying to invent the construct where student-athletes are treated as employees would threaten the existence of many women's sports, Olympic sports and certainly strip a tremendous amount of opportunity from the

7,000 student-athletes that are currently enjoying it by focusing so much of the resources on two sports where 2% or 3% of the student-athletes are going on to have a professional career. I'm talking about student-athletes like Megan Kufeld and Jeremiah Allison that we talked about this morning. It's our mission to protect and improve and modernize intercollegiate athletics so the vast majority of student-athletes have this opportunity decades from now. College sports are too important. They're too unique to America, to the underpinning of future generations of leadership for some of these radical changes to be successful.

So we've got an awful lot going on the field and off the field. As I said earlier, it's in our DNA in the Pac-12 to be leaders in terms of running a conference, what happens on the courts and fields as well as off. I know we can expect a great, highly competitive Pac-12 football season this year. We'll again have a very exciting new championship team and our Conference will continue to innovate and provide progressive leadership from NCAA reform to football. It's in our nature.

This is a watershed moment for collegiate athletics. With College Football Playoffs starting and all the changes that are happening outside that are really going to benefit our student-athletes in very positive ways, our universities and our fans. I myself am very excited for all the change that's taking place. I think on balance it's going to be very positive. I'm confident and optimistic about what the future of college athletics looks like.

Thank you all for being here for our Pac-12 Football Media Day. Looking forward to seeing you later today and during the football season. Thank you.