

# Pacific-12 Conference Media Days

Thursday, July 30 2015

## Commissioner Larry Scott

LARRY SCOTT: Well, good morning, and welcome to Pac-12 Football Media Day. It's great to see you all here today, and hello to all of you that are watching on the Pac-12 Networks on your television or on your devices. And welcome all of you to the second century of the Pac-12.

As you saw in that great video, the Pac-12 Conference has come a long way in the last hundred years and what makes me especially proud as Commissioner, is that from our founding at the Imperial Hotel in Portland, we've held true to that deep conviction that academic and athletic excellence can go hand in hand. It's easy for me to stand up here and talk about excellence, but it's much harder to deliver it.

For a hundred years, the Pac-12 Conference it's this excellence we plan to highlight this season with our centennial in a few different ways with special events, local celebrations, historical content that we'll show on the Pac-12 Networks and more, culminating in our birthday on December 2nd, celebrating our hundredth year.

As much as it is a time to celebrate, anniversaries like this are a great time to hit the pause button and reflect, both on where we've been and on where we're going. The last 18 months will be remembered as one of the most transformative periods in the history of college athletics. Through it all cynicism about the mission of college athletics persisted, and many even questioned whether our students should be deemed professionals or compensated in some way. I believe, however, this period has been good for us, and it's reinforced that with appropriate reform, college athletics can be an incredibly positive source for students and for our universities, and we can emerge from this tumultuous period even stronger and better. The national dialogue about changes to the collegiate experience has been extremely healthy for college athletics. While I acknowledge it was perhaps overdue, it's forced us to focus on and begin to resolve issues that have lingered for far too long. Importantly, Pac-12 presidents and chancellors have led the way in embracing new ideas



and making meaningful changes to modernize college athletics. We've sharpened our focus on the educational mission and how we best support student-athletes on creating future leaders and on providing academic experiences that may never have been possible without sports.

At the root of what we've done I offer the last 18 months and what we'll continue over the next hundred years is reaffirm our commitment to student-athletes. We're doing this in a way that preserves the college experience and responds to the needs of today's student-athletes, both those with ambitions to play this sport professionally, and of course the overwhelming majority who have dreams and goals outside of their sport.

We've made important progress. Starting this year, we'll be increasing scholarship awards to take into account the full cost of attendance. We'll be guaranteeing four-year athletic scholarships and providing assistance to former student-athletes who choose to come back and complete their degrees. We've also made progress in ensuring student-athletes who are injured while playing sports get the medical care they've deserve even after they've left school.

In football, we've added spotters to better identify head trauma in realtime. Our medical staff and athletic trainers are sharing important data to track and fully analyze all sports injuries. And our conference is unique in spending \$3.5 million dollars a year to conduct research on head trauma, mental illness, and other health and safety issues affecting our student-athletes.

There is more to do, however. We're very involved in identifying ways to put more teeth into existing rules that limit the time demands that are placed on our student-athletes. Now, all of you know how competitive and driven our student-athletes are, and how difficult it can be to limit the time they devote to their sports. But it's important to us that they have time to participate in the full spectrum of campus life, and of course, to focus on their studies en route to meaningful degrees from Pac-12 schools.

Another way we're modernizing college athletics is by using new technology to enable fans to experience our

games in entirely new ways. As I think to the future, I believe that the coming decade will see an exponential increase in the extent to which fans use technology to interact with and engage our events.

Our conference, which incorporates the technology hubs of Seattle and Silicon Valley, and the entertainment capital here in Los Angeles, is committed to developing new ways to engage with fans. Every day we hear of new innovation on our campuses and look for ways to incorporate it into our efforts.

For the first time this year, with the help of new technology, fans in our stadiums will watch replay reviews on the video board as our officiating crews are reviewing the plays in their booth.

Now, it's impossible to look ahead to the next hundred years without believing that college athletics will reflect the globalized world in which we live, especially the increasingly international flavor of higher education today. New information and transportation technologies have shrunk the virtual and physical distances that separated us, and our economies and societies are becoming even more interdependent.

Our Chancellor at UCLA Gene Block summed it up really well when he described Bruins students are busy pursuing international research, and he described why the university is so focused on developing international fluency among their students through interconnected experiences.

Chancellor Block's quote, "This is what a world-class university does, drawing from, engaging with, and contributing to the entire world."

Now as the front porch of our universities, we believe that athletics can play a big role here. So at the Pac-12, we're reaching out to the Pacific Rim, and that is a logical extension of our growth, and it compliments our universities initiatives around athletics, academics, alumni relations and strategic partnerships we already have in China and in other countries.

So after a series of important exchanges and exhibition games over the last few years, the Pac-12 will make history this November with a regular season basketball game in Shanghai, between the Washington Huskies and the Texas Longhorns. The global vision does far more than just extend the Pac-12's reach overseas, and this event will be more than just one basketball game. It provides another way in which our member institutions can deepen their academic ties to new regions of the world, and it promises to be a seminal educational, academic and cultural exchange for our student-athletes.

As you can see, the Pac-12 has been busy putting in place the building blocks for our future. True to our legacy, cemented over the last hundred years, we've blazed our own trail and taken a leadership role in all these areas of change, from the new commitment with student-athletes to globalization to technology. Those building blocks also include the Pac-12 Networks and its innovative model where institutions maintain ownership and control. As you'll hear tomorrow from Lydia Murphy-Stephans from this podium, Pac-12 Networks has an unrivaled commitment to 850 live events and hundreds of hours of studio and shoulder programming which brings our fans closer to the Pac-12 than ever before.

The importance of being masters of our own destiny has also led to the creation of the Pac-12 multi media rights entity. This new entity will allow our universities to better control their brands and keep more of their revenue rather than the Lions share of it going to third parties. Finally, it's pushed us to make a commitment to our officiating programs. With a new hire of former NFL director of officiating, David Coleman, who will now be a full-time employee at the conference, we strive to have the best football officiating program in the country. Under David's leadership, we'll be at the forefront of training, accountability, and transparency.

David's going to provide more detail from this stage tomorrow, but should also expect more transparency from our programs with the media, more use of pool reporters and more officiating segments on the Pac-12 Networks.

My future outlook for college football is very optimistic on a national level, and certainly within the Pac-12. College football has never been stronger or more popular.

Last year's College Football Playoff was a resounding success, and brought even more attention to the sport we love. Beyond competing with the highlights was a successful inclusion of the Rose Bowl as a semi-final game every three years. In the new format, the Rose Bowl is set to remain one of America's greatest sporting traditions. We fought for this during the transition, and are thrilled to see this is going to continue.

Last year also saw a high point for the Pac-12 on the field. Our depth across both divisions saw ESPN calling this the best football conference in the country.

Oregon's Marcus Mariota deservedly won the Heisman Trophy, and the Ducks represented the Pac-12 admirably in the first ever College Football Playoff Championship game. We tied a conference record

with six bowl wins and we led All-Conferences with 16 All-Americans.

As a Commissioner, you'd never expect me to predict any dip in our success, but I do believe the best is yet to come. I'm excited about this season. Our coaches are the best in the country. Our schools are deepening their commitments to student-athletes and fans. And our national TV coverage is getting exposure to Pac-12 football in all pockets of the country.

Importantly, once again, the Pac-12 will have the toughest schedule in all of college football. On top of a tough, non-conference slate that includes games against the SEC, ACC, Big Ten, and Big 12 in the first month alone, we remain the only conference to play nine conference games and a championship game. I think it's safe to say our teams will earn their status on the field.

Simply put, no one will have a tougher road to the playoffs than the Pac-12 Champion. Also, fuelling my optimism about Pac-12 football is the character and achievement of our student-athletes on and off the field.

Missy Franklin and Marcus Mariota are two of the best known and winners of the male and female college athletes of the year at the recent ESPY Awards. But there are so many of our 7,000 student-athletes who benefit from 130 million dollars in scholarship aid to become dedicated students, stewards of their communities, and leaders on their campuses.

Just consider a few anecdotes from the group you'll get to meet here today. Even as he competes to be the very best quarterback in the country, Cody Kessler of USC has taken the time to form long lasting relationships with cancer patients who embody the fight-on spirit. Just this week he was involved with some of the athletes at the Special Olympics World Games held on USC's campus. Oregon State's Storm Barrs-Woods graduated with a degree in human development, becoming the first male in his family to earn a college degree.

Then, if you'll permit me, my favorite Pac-12 player, Larry Scott from Oregon State, aside from having a great name, Larry's going to graduate this year, and he's also the first in his family to graduate with a college degree. He says that being a student-athlete has taught him to give a hundred percent in everything, both on and off the field.

Washington's Deontae Cooper has already graduated with degrees in ethnic studies and communication. He's now pursuing his masters degree.

Colorado's Stephane Nembot, a native of Cameroon speaks three languages and nine African dialects. He holds a 3.3 GPA in international affairs. Dreams of returning to Africa to help developing communities.

Mike Bercovici from Arizona State earned his master's degree from Arizona State's sports business law masters program this year. He's going to leave Arizona State with not one, but with two degrees. His teammate, Jordan Simone was a walk-on at ASU who worked his way up to earn a scholarship, and is now one of the best safeties in the country, earning the opportunity to represent this team here at Pac-12 Media Days.

UCLA's representative, Jake Brendel, devotes his spare time to community service through his work with children with developmental disabilities, our nation's veterans and local school children.

These individuals and many, many more like them make their schools and this conference and this Commissioner proud every single day. As much as they might wow us on the football field, they are and will be in the future so much more than that.

So as we get ready for another season of incredible Pac-12 football, I want to salute our student-athletes and the leaders that they are becoming and ask that all of you here today take note. These are students for whom competing in athletics has created enormous opportunity, access to a first class education and important life lessons. It's through all of us that they'll be successful in life after football and grow into our leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you all for being here, and thanks to Warner Bros. for making this great facility available to us. I hope you enjoy your two days on the lot, and I look forward to seeing you throughout the season. Now I look forward to taking some of your questions.

**Q. Nine of the 25 most penalized teams last year in FCS were in the Pac-12. There seems to be a perception of overzealousness by officiating crews. I'm wondering if you think it's a case of overzealousness, or if there's a lack of discipline on the teams?**

LARRY SCOTT: Well, it's something we track and something we talk about regularly with our coaches. I don't think it's overzealousness, but there is a certain style of play in the Pac-12 that's led itself to certain types of penalties, holding and others. And that is the very open, fast-paced, multiple plays, lot of throwing plays types of offense a lot of our teams are known for. We do tend to run more plays than other conferences.

As we've looked at it, that is one of the criteria that we've identified that's probably always going to lend itself to more penalties. There is a direct correlation between the number of offensive plays that you run and the number of penalties.

Aside from that, I'm sure every conference has their own style of calling, but it's something we look at, but not something -- we have not come to the same conclusion that was underlying your question.

**Q. If I could follow up with that, I'm talking about specifically, for example I think there was a play either last year or the year before where they were measuring for the first down, and it was clearly about an inch and a half of space between the stick and the ball, and the Pac-12 crew determined that it was a first down. Stuff like that is giving the crews or a particular crew I should say, the perception of inconsistent officiating. I'm wondering if that's been addressed at all by you?**

LARRY SCOTT: Well, in that case that was probably a mistake that was made, and there are mistakes that get made in officiating. Our aspiration is to strive for perfection knowing it's unattainable in officiating. What I focus on, and what David Coleman, our new director of officiating focuses on is to have the best training in the country. To have accountability, so if mistakes, like the one you're alluding to that may have been made, officials are held accountable and it affects their grading, it may affect assignments or their future or postseason, things of that nature, and constant improvement. So in any given season, every conference is going to be able to point to particular errors that are made. What we look to is are we improving?

The thing I'm most excited about, perhaps, is with the commitment that we've made as a conference in all of our schools is to invest in having one of this country's leaders in football officiating, David Coleman. He was at the top echelon of all officiating at the NFL, and we've elevated to a full-time position. So now we're going to have someone seven days a week in the office, not just reviewing everything that takes place on a given Saturday, but also spending more time with our officials, training, working on improvement, working on mechanics and the like. So I'm confident there is no conference in the country that is making a greater commitment to excellence in officiating than the Pac-12.

**Q. Do you have a better gauge of how the Pac-12 Network will be distributed now that the DIRECTV, AT&T deal has gone through?**

LARRY SCOTT: Yeah, we are delighted that our good partner AT&T successfully acquired DIRECTV. We've

been looking forward to this because we have an excellent relationship with AT&T, have now for a couple of years. They're a partner of all 1 of our schools. They're a partner of the conference. Their video service, AT&T U-verse distributes the Pac-12 Networks. They're delighted with it, and obviously, they've now got to digest a \$49 billion dollar acquisition, but I'm confident we'll be a priority, and there will be discussions that take place hopefully very soon.

I'm optimistic that we'll have positive conversations. I can't predict what may happen when because those conversations have not been able to take place heretofore. But I'm delighted for our partners, delighted for us.

**Q. Do you feel that -- you went over how ESPN's picked the Pac-12 as the top football conference. But do you feel the conference gets the respect nationally and from national media that it deserves based on the accolades that you listed?**

LARRY SCOTT: I think we're getting there. I think our new television agreements, we're now three years into it, have gone a long way to making sure the whole country can see every single one of our games, which wasn't the case before. So between our partners at ESPN, FOX, and the Pac-12 Networks, every football game is telecast.

When you look at Marcus being the Heisman Trophy winner, that's done by subjective vote. When you look at the 15 AP All-Americans, Pac-12 had more than any other conference, and that's all done by voting. So all those objective measures that those of us out west have worried about and complained about, you're starting to see a shift.

I just saw before coming on stage, coaches' pole preseason, six teams in the top 25 for the Pac-12 Conference. So I think the perception lag and perception gap is starting to change. I think many saw us as the best football conference in the country last year going into this year. Many are seeing us as the best. Many are seeing the Pac-12 South as the best division in all of college football.

So this is not something that's going to happen overnight, and it's something you have to earn constantly. But I definitely see us making a lot of progress and there being a much greater recognition and respect being shown nationally to the Pac-12.

**Q. Commissioner, with so many conferences merging and moving on to various conferences, do you see sometime in the future the Pac-12 expanding maybe in the Midwest or some other**

**conferences that you guys may acquire?**

LARRY SCOTT: Yeah, I do not see us expanding for the foreseeable future. We are delighted with 12 schools. It's worked exceedingly well for us. Colorado and Utah were terrific additions, and our schools like playing each other. As a 12-team conference, playing nine conference games, this is an interesting distinction between us and some other conferences, our schools in any given division play the five other teams in their division, but they're also playing four out of the six teams every year in the other divisions. And this is why I'm confident standing up in front of a room like this and saying no one's got a tougher schedule than the Pac-12, and the Pac-12 Champion's got the toughest road because there aren't many misses that you can have within your conference, number one. Then you've got to win again in the Conference Championship Game.

Well, I look forward to seeing you all later, and enjoy your couple days here. Thank you.

On top of that, if you look at the non-conference games, our schools willingly choose to play just in the first few weeks of the year. We've got games against Notre Dame, we've got Texas, we've got Texas A&M. We've got Michigan State. We've got Michigan. We've got Northwestern, Virginia. We're playing all the major conferences. That is part of the spirit and the history of the Pac-12, like the competition both within our conference and taking on all-comers in terms of national competition. So I think it stands us in good stead.

One of the reasons I pushed hard for and am delighted that we've got a College Football Playoff Selection Committee the way we have because I think now we're being rewarded for that strength of schedule, and part of it is 12. When you go beyond 12, you're going to dilute somewhat. You're going to have more erratic types of schedules within your conference and all that. So there are a lot of reasons that go into it, but we are delighted with 12 and do not intend to expand.

**Q. I'd like to follow up on the earlier question about the Pac-12 Networks. How likely is it given the AT&T takeover of DIRECTV that you're going to have to cut the deals with your current partners to take less money perhaps to work a deal with DIRECTV?**

LARRY SCOTT: I certainly don't anticipate any change with our existing relationships. We've got over 70 agreements with individual contributors, including four of the top six in the country. So our distribution is terrific, and well established. Our partners are very happy with it.

So I really can't speculate on how conversations will go with AT&T, except I'm confident we'll be having a conversation soon, and I expect them to be positive. But aside from that I really couldn't hypothesize.