

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 24 2019

Larry Scott Pac-12 Commissioner

LARRY SCOTT: Good morning. I'd like to welcome you to the 2019 Pac-12 Football Media Day, and this year the 150th anniversary of the great game of college football, which also happens to be the 104th anniversary of the Pac-12 Conference.

Members of the media that are here today do so much to support our programs and our student-athletes. I want to thank you for being here today, for your coverage of the conference throughout the year. I'd also like to thank our football coaches and our student-athletes for being here today to talk about our football programs and the upcoming season ahead.

When I look at our coaches and our student-athletes, I think the group that we have here today is a tremendous reflection of the athletic and academic excellence that our conference is known for, and they give me great optimism for the season ahead and this conference's future success.

Before I provide some updates and reflections, I also want to thank all Pac-12 athletics directors who are in attendance here today along with our bowl partners and representatives of the College Football 150th Anniversary campaign, including College Football 150th Anniversary executive director Kevin Weiberg. I've been honored to be able to work with Kevin throughout the year and humbled to serve as the chair of the 150th College Football Anniversary Committee and to have the opportunity to work with leaders from other conferences, athletics directors, coaches, the Football Bowl Association, the National Football Foundation, and so many others that have rallied together to make this a tremendous year of celebration for the great sport of college football.

This year will be an incredible opportunity to celebrate the positive impact that college football has had on so many young men, our communities, and our country. You will see fantastic promotional efforts in our conference and around the country, from our broadcast partners, significant branding and community activities, amongst other initiatives throughout the season.

I hope you have an opportunity to speak with Kevin and other representatives that are here today, and in particular I hope you have a chance to meet not just



with the coaches and the student-athletes that are here but also our athletics directors who are all in attendance who are driving the success of our programs and supporting our student-athletes day in and day out.

I'm very proud of the national leadership the Pac-12 Conference provides in so many important issues, and this is also embodied by the important leadership roles our athletics directors and coaches are playing when it comes to the sport of college football.

Rob Mullens is the current chair of the College Football Playoff Selection Committee. Mark Harmon from Utah was just appointed to the Football Oversight Committee. Ray Anderson from Arizona State is the outgoing chair of the Football Competition Committee and the Football Oversight Committee. And Stanford coach David Shaw is the current chair of the Football Rules Committee. These are all prominent positions, and Pac-12 leaders are shaping the future of college football on a national stage.

Overall we are working together as a league better than we ever have, with our CEO group, who's currently led by University of Colorado chancellor Phil DiStefano, our AD group, and as you'll hear today, we've got a lot of positive results and progress as a result of this great collaboration, working day in and day out on behalf of our student-athletes to take our conference to the next level of success.

Over the next few minutes, I want to touch upon three main topics: One, the upcoming Pac-12 football season. Secondly, we've got some important news related to Pac-12 football, including the future home of the Pac-12 Football Championship Game, our future bowl partnerships, and the results of an independent football officiating review process that we've conducted over the last few months. And lastly, Pac-12 Conference athletics success across all sports, including important updates on areas of leadership and innovation at the Pac-12 that we're very proud of in the context of our overall mission to support our student-athletes.

First, Pac-12 football on the field this year. As a conference, we aim to improve every year, to demonstrate the improved depth of performance

across our teams, but to also have elite teams that are competing for the College Football Playoff, for National Championships, other New Year's Six and prestigious bowl games.

I think the building blocks for our football programs are coming into place, and our teams are going to have amazing opportunities to prove themselves very early in the season getting some of the non-conference match-ups that we have. There's no question that the past couple of seasons have fallen short of the historical standards for the Pac-12 and where our programs aspire to be. We have to acknowledge many of the criticisms that the conference has received, and I can tell you that collectively we've taken a hard look at everything about how we're operating when it comes to football.

We're working very closely with our coaches and our member schools, and they individually are working very hard and making important investments to explore all avenues that will position our conference for future success in football and to support the Pac-12 as a whole.

We have a sense of urgency in this work, but we also know that having a long-term view is important, and holding true to the principles and values our conference holds dear is very important, as well.

At the same time, there's a few reasons that as a conference we're very excited about the prospects for the upcoming season. First and foremost, we're returning a very strong group of coaches with tremendous track records of success, who this year will be joined by one new member, Colorado head coach Mel Tucker. Want to welcome Mel.

And while we've got some very experienced, seasoned, and some of the most successful college football coaches in history, it's important to note that half of our coaches have been in the league less than two years. So we still have a lot of new coaches that are building their programs, bringing in their type of recruits, and shaping their programs for future success.

Our conference has great talent. We're returning 11 First Team and 13 Second Team All-Conference players. Our strong running game this year will feature six returning backs who rushed for more than 1,000 yards last season. And those running backs are going to be supported by offensive lines that on average will feature more than three returning starters per team. Some Pac-12 teams have been known for strong defense and great secondaries. We've had seven defensive backs selected for the NFL Draft this past year, but our secondaries are going to feature several big playmakers across the conference.

And of course, again, our conference is going to have candidates for the Heisman Trophy, some of whom are here today.

Additionally, our schools have continued to make significant investments in very strong coaching staffs and in their football facilities, which of course support their recruiting efforts and the overall success of their programs. Almost half of the Pac-12 teams are named in one preseason top 25 poll or another, and this is a great indication of what we believe that our conference boasts: Competitive depth and a number of teams with the potential for very strong seasons and able to compete for the College Football Playoff.

Some of the great nationally broadcast non-conference match-ups will be kicking off the season this year. Thanks to our broadcast agreements, there's going to be amazing exposure for games including Oregon versus Auburn where ESPN GameDay will be there for that opener, Colorado and Nebraska, UCLA-Oklahoma, USC-Notre Dame, Arizona State-Michigan State, and Stanford playing both Northwestern and Notre Dame this year.

Thanks to the Pac-12 broadcast agreements, these high-profile non-conference games will be broadcast on national network TV between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. kickoff times, providing our schools with the most exposure possible to demonstrate the strength of the conference this year.

And all these games are continued indication that Pac-12 schools are not afraid to play tough schedules, which should make the season even more exciting for our fans.

Turning to other Pac-12 football news, on the broadcast front, in addition to the excitement of being at the games, our fans will once again be able to follow along through our partners at Fox Sports and ESPN who combined are going to be telecasting 44 Pac-12 football games this year, and for the first time ever, ABC network is going to be telecasting our Pac-12 Football Championship Game at Levi's Stadium on Friday evening. And of course Pac-12 Networks is going to showcase 35 football games and be visiting every campus with multiday coverage leading up to the games, broadening our exposure for Pac-12 football and going deeper than we've ever gone before.

Pac-12 Networks president Mark Shuken is here today with us. I know he'll be doing a roundtable later for those that want to talk to him about specific Pac-12 Networks news and our specific plans for amping up our football coverage this season. I think you'll find that interesting and worthwhile.

Overall, when it comes to media, I think we're all noticing there's an unprecedented shift occurring in the media landscape and in consumer habits. While this creates uncertainty, it also creates tremendous opportunity, and because we own and control all of our media rights and have all of our rights coming up in 2024, we continue to feel very good about how we're positioned for the future. While we recognize during these changing times and paradigm shifts, we've faced headwinds on distribution with the Pac-12 Networks, as a whole when it comes to media, we've got strategic patience and we're going to be able to take advantage of these positive media trends, new players in the marketplace, and the increasing value that we see in our rights, especially as these new players from technology and media come in and are aggressively bidding for sports rights.

That's why, as many of you know, we've recently been through an exploration process looking at potential strategic media partners, even before 2024. We've been delighted with the great interest that's been generated and attractive bids and valuations that we received from a diverse group of some of the most respected media companies as well as new technology players. And as of today, we continue to narrow the field of companies that we're talking to that could provide important strategic value and revenue to our members.

We may or may not ultimately do something before 2024, but we've got the optionality to be able to consider these things because of our ownership and control.

And certainly we feel it always makes sense to take a look at how we can do things better, how we might be able to help our schools and our programs short-term as well as long-term. And because of the interest displayed and because of the dynamic media landscape, we're very optimistic about the future.

This year, the Pac-12 will crown its champion at the Pac-12 Football Championship at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, where we have had some memorable games over the past six years, and we've enjoyed a great partnership with the San Francisco 49ers. At the same time, we've always envisioned taking this crown jewel event to other major markets around our footprint, and today I'm very excited and pleased to announce that our Football Championship Game for the years 2020 and 2021 will be played in the brand-new Las Vegas Stadium, the new home of the NFL Raiders, which has proved to be a very successful and desirable destination location for the Pac-12 men's and women's basketball tournaments, and ones that I know our fans have really enjoyed, and they're going to enjoy going to

our championship game in Las Vegas.

I've had a chance to visit the stadium, see the plans, hope many of you have, as well. It is truly state-of-the-art in every respect. It'll be convenient. It's right off the strip, close to the airport, and it's going to be a fantastic destination for football fans to enjoy the best of Pac-12 football in our championship game.

I want to thank our partners that have been involved in making this happen and creating this tremendous opportunity for our student-athletes and programs for the next two editions of the Pac-12 Football Championship Game, some who are in attendance here with us today, and I hope you will have a chance to speak to throughout the day.

Marc Badain, president of the Oakland Raiders and soon-to-be Las Vegas Raiders, is here with us today; Steve Hill, CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority; and George Kliavkoff, who's the president of Entertainment & Sports at MGM Resorts, these three gentlemen and their organizations really took the lead in helping us make this opportunity a reality for our programs, and we're delighted about the partnership.

Speaking of postseason, we also expect to announce shortly our full lineup that we anticipate will be enhanced in several respects. Of course we are honored to have the traditional anchor of the Rose Bowl Game, the storied Rose Bowl Game as the Pac-12. We've already announced an extension with the Alamo Bowl, which follows the New Year's Six placements. We'll see the Pac-12 No. 1 team against the Big 12's No. 1 team. I was pleased to be in Las Vegas with my colleagues from the SEC and the Big Ten and have a chance to announce an arrangement, an elevated bowl arrangement in Las Vegas at the new Las Vegas Stadium that will see the Pac-12's No. 2 and No. 3 play against the top pick from the SEC. As I've said, I expect we'll have a few more announcements that will round out our bowl announcements over the next few weeks.

The final announcement I'd like to make under other important football news is in regard to a recently completed independent football officiating review, which was conducted by a firm which specializes in making recommendations about officiating and other programs. The Sibson review was independent and comprehensive in scope, looking at all aspects of the Pac-12 officiating program, and it's part of our continuing effort to continuously review and improve our football officiating.

Our work began in February and included benchmarking against the NFL all four of our peer conferences. It benefited from detailed input from all of

our coaches, all of our athletics directors, current and former officials and other key stakeholders.

Before I go into the recommendations arising out of the review, all of which we will be adopting for this current football season, I want to thank Ray Anderson, athletics director at Arizona State, who chaired an athletics directors' subcommittee that oversaw the work of Sibson and helped guide the process. Ray served with Oregon State athletics director Scott Barnes, Colorado athletics director Rick George, and Oregon athletics director Rob Mullens as the steering committee for Sibson's independent work.

As you'll see in the report, a summary of the findings, which are being released, Sibson conclude that the Pac-12 officiating program is fundamentally sound and predominantly consistent with industry best practices.

At the same time, they identified several very important areas that could be and need to be strengthened further. We're releasing the summary of the findings as we speak and the detailed recommendations that we'll be acting on. And I'd like to highlight four for you right now so as you have a chance to look through it, you'll have a sense of the headlines.

Going forward, we're changing our organizational structure to a more independent structure for our football officiating, whereby the head of Pac-12 football officiating will have a direct line to myself as the commissioner and not be reporting to our football administrator.

Secondly, there will be a very detailed manual codifying all the policies and procedures involved in collaborative replay that will also be released in the next several days or weeks made available to the public, as well, of course, to our coaches, administrators, detailing exactly the processes and procedures that will be followed for collaborative replay, which will eliminate the possibility of an incident like we had last year in the Washington State-USC game.

Thirdly, there will be significant enhancements to training programs for officials and more consistency in grading and training in the officiating and from our supervisors. And there's going to be a shift in our communications protocol when it comes to officiating, with more transparency and public comment around significant calls or errors that either impact player safety or the result of the game.

We are also going to be monitoring closely what the SEC is doing with their Twitter feed and their other external communications, and we'll see if we want to make further adjustments in the future. But for us this will be an important step forward in terms of how and

when we communicate based on the significance of any egregious errors that have an impact on player safety or the outcome of the game.

I urge you to read the summary, and during the lunch hour I'm going to do my usual roundtable for those that are interested in speaking. I'm going to kick off the roundtable and ask Ray Anderson, who chaired this independent review led by Sibson, to join me. So we'll save all questions about the officiating review and the Sibson report for the lunch hour so that Ray can join me in answering those questions.

This was a very extensive and comprehensive process, and as I mentioned, we are moving forward to implement all of Sibson's recommendations to build upon what they found is a very strong, fundamental foundation for the Pac-12 officiating program but with significant areas for improvement. We are committed to excellence, being the best we can be, and ensuring that our officiating program continues to improve and is as strong as possible.

While today is about football, it's also a great opportunity to touch very briefly on some other aspects that define the Pac-12 Conference as a leader, not just on the field but off the field, and to give you some insight into some of the initiatives being led by our schools that are central to our mission of supporting our student-athletes on and off the field.

I'm proud to say that once again, for the 14th consecutive year and the 53rd year out of 59 years, the Pac-12 was the best overall conference in the country. We demonstrated this by winning more NCAA championships than any other, led by Stanford, which won a remarkable six NCAA championships this year, and it's their 25th consecutive Director's Cup title. The Pac-12 has now won 526 NCAA titles in its history across 28 different men's and women's sports, far surpassing the nearest competitor conference.

Our conference historically has emphasized its commitment to women's sports and Olympic sports, and in that connection I have to note with pride that six of the members of the recent U.S. Women's National Team that won their fourth World Cup were recent Pac-12 student-athletes. I know I had the chance to enjoy watching when they were at our schools.

And you can bet that we're very much looking forward to this next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo, exactly one year from today, and then the Games coming to LA, of course, in 2028. I'm very proud that our conference will be sending more student-athletes and former student-athletes to Tokyo than any other conference. It's the nature of the broad-based excellence represented by our schools.

Beyond this commitment to across-the-board excellence on the field is a closely related commitment to innovation and leadership off the field, as well. This has been demonstrated by the Pac-12's continued commitment to funding research into the prevention and treatment of brain trauma and a particular focus on Pac-12 student-athlete mental health, which is also getting funding for important research. Uniquely amongst college conferences, we've committed to sustainability in our facilities and our athletics activities. We held our third annual Sustainability Conference this year, and we've established the Pac-12 Sustainability Working Group and a Pac-12 Team Green initiative, which brings together our athletics administrators and sustainability professionals from all 12 of our campuses to support those efforts as we're moving toward a more environmentally sustainable athletic enterprise.

And we continued to build upon the Pac-12 Global initiative, not only with our basketball game in China, which this year for the first time will feature two Pac-12 teams playing against each other -- Arizona State and Colorado will kick off the regular season in basketball in Shanghai -- but also with teams visiting Australia and Japan across different sports.

And we continue to expand our media distribution outside the U.S., continuing to raise the profile of the conference and of our 12 outstanding universities.

So thank you for being here again today. I know it's a jam-packed day with all of our coaches, student-athletes, athletics directors, bowl and other partners that are here today. Very much appreciate the effort you all make to be here today, but also to follow Pac-12 throughout the football season, throughout the year. Looking forward to what promises to be a very exciting season.

Thank you.

Q. Can you tell us the bowl games that we're going to have representing the Pac-12 schools, some of the bowl games?

LARRY SCOTT: Yes, so we of course have the traditional relationship with the Rose Bowl, the Alamo Bowl. We'll get the highest ranked Pac-12 team outside of the College Football Playoff and the New Year's Six bowls. And then we have not announced the rest of our lineup yet. We're in the process of renewing and extending agreements and maybe some new ones along the way, with the exception of the Las Vegas Bowl. We've had a great relationship in Las Vegas, playing against a Mountain West team.

It's really been completely repositioned, thanks to the Raiders and the Las Vegas Stadium, incredible facility.

Everyone has come together to really elevate that game, so it's going to move up in our lineup, and our second or third team after the College Football Playoff. And, notably, this is the first time we've ever had a bowl tie-in against an SEC team. So I know that will not go unnoticed for many of you in the room.

I think fans have been clamoring for a long time to see the Pac-12 go head to head in a bowl tie-in with the SEC. So it's no small step that we've finally been able to achieve that, thanks to the help of our friends at the Raiders, ESPN that's involved in the game, MGM, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors, and work with the Big Ten to make that an alternating game.

We're going to announce the full bowl lineup very soon. We just didn't have all the I's dotted and T's crossed with those agreements before Media Day, so there will be more news to follow.

Q. In your global initiative, are you planning on any other sports besides basketball in Japan and Australia?

LARRY SCOTT: Yes, we are. We regularly have teams from other sports that are taking advantage of the opportunity. I even think Arizona State ice hockey is going to China this year, but we've had volleyball teams, women's basketball teams, golf teams, and I know we've had very active discussions around baseball and other sports. I can follow up and give you the exact details of which teams are going to which places, but the Global initiative provides financial and other support for every single one of our schools to support individual programs, regardless of sport, if they want to take advantage of the opportunity to travel to strategically important markets in the Pacific Rim.

On top of that, a cornerstone of the program has included very high-profile regular season basketball game, with the only league not just in college but professional, as well, that actually plays a regular season game in China. That's gone very, very well thanks to our partnership with Alibaba.

Slowly, steadily, there are nice building blocks happening including increased media interest in television agreements we have overseas. Continues to build steadily, but it's certainly well beyond men's basketball.

Q. The Pac-12 faces a really unique challenge unlike any other conference in that 75 percent of its members reside in states where recreational marijuana use is legal. Arizona is probably set to vote on it in 2020, and now you've moved the Pac-12 Championship to another state in which that is the case. Does the Pac-12 as a conference do

anything to address this unique challenge being that NCAA regulations don't necessarily match up with state law the way that many other conferences do?

LARRY SCOTT: One of the great things about the Pac-12 Conference is the diversity in many respects, and that includes the states that we play in and the types of schools and the environments that we're in. But our approach at the conference level has really been to defer to each of our universities in their states. We do not have a unified position across the board given the diversity of state laws on that topic and our own campuses' approaches to those things.

So it's really left campus-by-campus, state-by-state basis. There's not a conference policy around that.

Q. A lot of the reports are that the Pac-12 is still trailing other Power Fives in revenue, significantly behind the SEC, Big Ten. What do you think the biggest reason is for that, and what are you guys doing to address that issue?

LARRY SCOTT: Well, I think -- I don't know if it's the biggest issue, but certainly a significant issue is timing. It wasn't very long ago in 2012 when we signed our media deals that we had the largest media contracts in the country. Other conferences' TV deals have since come up, other conferences have expanded and renegotiated TV deals or started networks. So some of this is just timing. And come 2024, you'll see the league tables in revenue, as people like to follow them at the conference level, shift again, and you're going to see the Pac-12 skyrocket up. I can't tell you right now exactly where we'll land, but I think it'll be impressive.

And it's not just around media agreements. It also has got something to do with bowl performance, participation in the College Football Playoff, which generates revenue that flows through the conferences made with all members. It's got something to do with teams that are participating in the NCAA basketball tournament, where conferences generate units that get shared equally, and other revenues that are generated from the center.

I'd say some of it is timing, some of it is cyclical in terms of what's being generated from the center, and some of it's got to do, frankly, with the strategy that we've taken and the long-time view that we've taken about owning and controlling our rights because we envision a world come 2024 where there are going to be very, very significant opportunities we want to take advantage of. So we've made the choice as a league to keep all of our rights available to be able to relicense all our rights in 2024.

Some of our peers have traded short-term value but

have committed their rights long into the future, to 2035. So we're measuring success over a longer period of time, not just where we sit now.

Having said that, keep in mind that the revenue our schools have to work with, hiring coaches, building facilities, providing support for student-athletes, is made up in small part based on what they get from the conference. It's a very important source of revenue, but their largest source of revenue is what they generate locally, and we've got schools that are competing well, and our schools often point out to me we've got other very unique and strong advantages in terms of the academic prowess of our schools, the markets we recruit very well. And as I pointed out, the real measure we focus on is competitive success, and we continue to win more than any other conference across the board.

You know, it's a lot of different factors in answering your question, and I'm glad you gave me the opportunity to add some context to it. And the last thing I'd say is the exploration that I talked about where we're looking at possible media partners even before '24 is a recognition that revenue is very important to our universities. And even though we've got this long-term strategy and we're very focused on 2024, we're always willing to look at the environment, look at the market. And if there are opportunities to stay consistent with our strategy but take advantage of shorter-term opportunities, we're working really closely with our athletics directors, really closely with our presidents and chancellors in terms of evaluating everything.

So that's how we're approaching that conversation.

Q. In terms of the football title game, I know that the next two years are in Vegas, but do you envision it kind of moving around to different parts of the conference? There's a new LA stadium opening up next year, Seattle with their facility. I mean, you've got Glendale, which hosts the Fiesta Bowl.

LARRY SCOTT: Yeah, I feel very fortunate in our league that we've got great markets, great traditional facilities, and yeah, between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, I think we've got the two newest state-of-the-art, best football stadiums that are going to be built. We look forward to having our teams and our student-athletes have the opportunity to compete in those places.

In the case of Las Vegas, we've been able to announce the bowl game. We've been able to announce now the Football Championship Game. We've got some of our teams that are going to play some early season games in that facility, as well. I don't have anything to

announce today. I expect that our teams will have opportunities to play in the new Los Angeles Stadium, which is fantastic, and something we're very excited about.

We announced two years in Las Vegas because we're really excited about being there in the year the stadium comes live, in the first year of that stadium. We think there will be a tremendous buzz, tremendous excitement throughout our footprint, amongst our fans to be there in those early years. And then we'll evaluate.

We've been very fortunate to have a lot of options available. We've had a great experience with the 49ers. We're looking forward to the next two years, and then we'll see after that. But we're not going into it, to answer your question, with a specific formula in mind or with a definitive plan after that. We're taking it a step at a time.

Q. What would your reaction be or what would the conference's reaction be if in Sacramento or another state capital legislation was in the future signed into law, as is being considered, that would allow student-athletes to be paid and/or sponsored?

LARRY SCOTT: So we are very clearly opposed to any type of pay-for-play system. Notably, the federal courts in the Ninth Circuit have also weighed in now on multiple occasions to say they do not support any system for compensation for student-athletes that's not tethered to education. I think we'd be opposed to the type of system you described, and it would certainly be a violation of NCAA rules.

Having said that, the NCAA is about to start exploration whether there is a possible system to look at name, image and likeness value for student-athletes that is tethered to education that is not pay for play, and we'll see where that process goes.

In fact, one of our athletics directors, Rick George from Colorado, is on the committee. I think he's flying there today to start that conversation. So we support that conversation, but anything that looks like pay for play or compensation to student-athletes that's not related to their education is something that would run counter to the fundamental nature of collegiate athletics and amateur student-athletes.

Q. With USC adding an FCS school, UC Davis, it appears that perhaps some of the teams in the conference are looking more towards the SEC model. I'm wondering how you feel if the SEC and the ACC do not go down to eight conference games, would the Pac-12 consider playing only

eight conference games to make it a more level field?

LARRY SCOTT: We regularly discuss that question, and every time we've discussed that question, the important principles of having a tough schedule, playing as many teams as possible in the league, challenging yourself have been the overriding principles that have defined what our campuses want to do. So we've been committed to nine conference games.

Interestingly, take USC as an example. Not only do they have nine conference games, but they play Notre Dame every year. No one requires them to do that. I mentioned some of the other games, UCLA playing against Oklahoma. That's nine tough conference games in the juggernaut which is the Pac-12, plus schools like Oklahoma, Notre Dame, Northwestern, Michigan State, Oklahoma State, Nebraska.

I think that should indicate to everyone that our schools want their student-athletes to have the opportunity to play on the biggest stages, to challenge themselves. Our schools do not approach it from the perspective of how do we game the system or simply have it be about the College Football Playoff. But that's a decision our schools make. Our schools come together as a conference and decide what the conference schedule is going to be.

Having said that, we have spent a lot of time over the last year or two with our football coaches, with our athletics directors, examining our historical scheduling policies, and with the decision to stay with nine conference games. We have become more flexible and more purposeful in how we actually lay out the schedule. We've made some adjustments to make sure schools individually are not put in extraordinary situations like two away games back to back, a Saturday followed by a Friday night, as an example.

We recently discussed here showing some more flexibility in terms of opening up the back end of the schedule. We've been pretty rigid historically and said non-conference games are going to be the first three weeks, and then the rest of the season is conference schedule with the notable exception of the Notre Dame game between USC and Stanford.

I think you'll see over time we'll have more games, non-conference games later in the season, which I guess is one of the features of the SEC that you might be referring to. I think you'll start seeing a little more flexibility in our scheduling and more and more of our schools having some non-conference games later in the season, which is going to mean conference games a little bit earlier in the season.

I appreciate you asking that because I do want to convey that while our schools really align about some important principles, we are looking at ways to adapt and be more flexible in terms of how the schedule lays out.

I think the last thing I'd say is some of the news I'm reading is I think other conferences are moving a little bit more to the Pac-12 model. I think you'll see nationally schools realizing they have to schedule better games. Fans are not going to turn up for games that are not competitive. So I actually think we're a little bit ahead of the curve.

There is no national model for scheduling. One of the principles that defines the way the College Football Playoff works, there is autonomy that individual conferences have in terms of how they want to schedule, and the job of the Selection Committee is to weigh up strength of schedule and figure out who the best teams are. But I don't foresee a time in the near future where it's going to be nationally mandated how conferences have to schedule.

Q. The reason why I'm asking that is because every year there are teams that play five road games, conference road games, while others only play four. So as far as the conference is concerned, there are probably five or six teams every year that have a disadvantage, whereas in the SEC they don't. I think that was more on line why I was asking you about the eight.

LARRY SCOTT: Yeah, so that's been weighed up in the consideration about eight versus nine. The point you make, which is a valid one, is discussed, and as our schools have weighed up the balances and the pros and cons, they've decided we like nine games, even with that imbalance.

What we of course do is try to be equitable in terms of how it's distributed so you won't see the same teams with five away games every year, but you're correct.