

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Hollywood, California, USA

Arizona State Sun Devils

Herm Edwards

Press Conference



HERM EDWARDS: It's good to be here. Obviously I think all our coaches, part of the Pac-12 family, we enjoyed our time together. We've been meeting basically on Zoom meetings the last I don't know how long it's been. It was fun to see faces. Good to see you folks back in the audience. It's always good when we can get into somewhat of normal circumstances.

Speaking of circumstances, right now as you guys know, well aware, we are under NCAA review. With that being said, we cannot comment on what's taking place with our football team.

We also know that ahead of us is a new way of college football with the NIL. We also understand that COVID is a big part of something that we're still dealing with in college football, in sports, in the world as well. Those things are a little bit hovering over us. How we handle all those things I think is going to be very important.

I thought the commissioner did a nice job last night of really talking about some things that are very, very important for this conference going forward. Along with Merton Hanks, I think they'll represent this conference in a way that will be fun to watch and develop and grow together.

That being said, we have two of our outstanding athletes, two team captains, Chase Lucas and Jayden Daniels across from me that are excited about being here.

I think our team has tremendous focus this year. You could see it in the spring. A lot of the veteran guys returned. I think this conference in general, when you look at the Pac-12 conference, a lot of players who are draft eligible last year decided to stay. I think this conference this year will produce a lot of NFL-quality players, which is kind of exciting to see.

Very competitive conference. I think the coaches, regardless of what school they coach, are very excited about their football team, especially when you have a lot of

veterans that have had a lot of experience playing in this conference that decided to come back.

It will be an interesting season, very competitive season.

I'll open it up for questions.

Q. I understand you're not going to comment about the investigation. How do you work to prevent it from being a distraction for your staff, players?

HERM EDWARDS: Well, for us it hasn't been a distraction at all, to be quite honest. If you watch our players work and our coaching staff, we're excited about getting back in the building tomorrow. They're there today, but I'm going to be back in the building tomorrow. Really going forward on starting camp the 4th of August.

I heard the local guys, you guys will actually hopefully get to attend practice, kind of see what it looks like.

We're a focused football team. I think it has a lot to do with the players that decided to come back in the spring. That's kind of where our mindset is right now, as far as what I know, what I see and feel about the players.

Q. Can you speak to the expectations for your team this year? It seems like anything less than a Pac-12 South championship might be a disappointment by fans or even internally.

HERM EDWARDS: You say that. I heard we were ranked third, so... (Laughter).

Q. What do you think about that?

HERM EDWARDS: It's fine. That's what's great about sports, always ranking. I can remember when I first took this seat, what, four years ago. I think the same thing was kind of applied. You guys... I get it. I've been on that side. I've been on your people's side before, I was in the media. That's always hard. I understand why some teams are ahead of us, maybe some other teams should be ahead of us. I don't really know how you draw the conclusion.



But the two teams that are obviously up there along with our whole conference I think is very competitive. That's what's great about this conference. The more I'm involved in it, it's very, very competitive. I asked the question many of times, you guys would probably know more than me, what team in this conference, there's nine teams, whether it's in the north or the south combined, who has gone undefeated, who has gone nine in a row, won all the conference games, whether it's in the south, north, with the common opponent you play outside the conference, that is a conference game or Pac-12 game? Very difficult I think to go 9-0. We understand that. That's what makes the conference so unique. Every game is very competitive in our conference. It's that kind of place. It's fun to be involved in it.

Q. You talked about this new way of college football with the NIL. I'd like to know what your thoughts are on it, how you plan on attacking that with your players? How much money did you leave on the table because you weren't able to make any money from that?

HERM EDWARDS: Well, I'll tell you this, I think it's a new day in college football. But not just college football, in college athletics, for all student-athletes. When you think about student-athletes, it's not just football, it's all sports. We have over 600 athletes at ASU.

How it affects the student-athlete, your university, on where he or she may decide to go, I think this is part of the recruiting of it now. You better embrace it. If you don't, you're going to get left behind. That's the thing we learn in life, that things move on. You have to be ahead of it.

I think we've got a plan how to do that. I think there's going to be some glitches. First time that we all are dealing with this. But it will be interesting to watch the next three or four years of how this really develops and what it looks like, the model of how to do this.

I don't think anyone has an answer right now because it's so new to us.

Q. I asked you earlier about filling Adam Breneman's role. Will there be one guy filling in for the tight end's coach?

HERM EDWARDS: Yes, there be, because you don't want too many voices in the room. We're staffed enough to be able to adjust. That's what you do, you always adjust. We'll be in good shape that way.

Q. Can you say who that guy is?

HERM EDWARDS: Right now I don't want to. I don't think it's appropriate to do that right now, before our whole staff actually knows. I would like to tell them first (smiling).

Q. Can you talk about your transition from the studio to the sideline.

HERM EDWARDS: It wasn't as difficult as some people may imagine. I was fortunate enough a couple times, eight years, coaching the Under Armour All-American game. So I kind of stayed in touch with the high school athlete that was about to enter college.

Coaching is like parenting. You raise your kids, they grow up. Hopefully in life they provide you grandkids, right? You become a grandparent. But you don't forget how to be a parent. You don't forget how to coach. You don't forget.

Now, you don't forget how the game of football is played. Some of us would say at a certain age, we can't play anymore. I've always said I have one hit left. But the one thing you do know is that the longer you stay in it, some things never change.

Athletes change, numbers change, but the game really doesn't change a whole lot. The basic fundamentals of how to coach it, how to play it, are a part of football. As long as you never lose sight of that, you'll be fine.

Are athletes probably bigger, faster, stronger than the generation I played in the mid '70s? Yeah, they're bigger, faster, stronger. But life, the game of how you teach it, it doesn't change. That's the one thing that when you've always done it your whole life, you don't forget that, right?

It's like remember the first time they took the training wheels off the tricycle and you had to ride it. Once you learned how to ride the bike, you don't forget how to ride it anymore. You get a certain age, you don't ride it, you say, You know what, I want to get on a bike. Might be a little wobbly in the beginning. You figure out how to steer it and pedal and go. Same thing with coaching, that's what I believe.

Q. Every year you get some athletes, student-athletes, that may consider going to the pros a little early. Do you think the fact that now they can get monetary benefits from name, image and likeness will keep some students here another year instead of leaping to the NFL?

HERM EDWARDS: We don't know what the number is, right? There's a NFL number and there's going to be a college number now. I think all athletes look at it different.

We know this. A lot of these young people today, they're three and done. When you start recruiting them, you actually understand they're probably three and done.

COVID has been a year where obviously guys decide to come back. Our season was only four games. It was cut short for a lot of folks. But I think that will still be a factor.

I think the NFL will probably pay a little bit more.

Q. I was talking about the athletes that maybe are probably not quite ready but maybe family members are pushing them.

HERM EDWARDS: That's something we're all going to have to deal with, right? As a coach, the family member wondering what it's going to look like. When money's involved, you never know. You can't stop them from trying to better their self. If money is part of the equation, then that's part of it. You have to realize that and be able to deal with it.

Q. Having covered teams in the past that were under NCAA investigation, it sort of felt like there was a dark cloud hovering over things throughout that time. Are you concerned about that at all heading into this season?

HERM EDWARDS: I don't know a thing about other teams. I just know about our team. That's all I'm concerned with.

Our team's fine. We're excited about playing and preparing for the season. That's what I do know. Can't comment on what you've seen or witnessed. I don't know.

Q. When those stories first came out, there were people at other schools who were saying disparaging things about ASU. What did you make of that?

HERM EDWARDS: I think if you know me, the people that have been covering us, people that know me my whole life, I don't really pay attention to that stuff. So I wouldn't know.

All I know is with all the coaches this week, the conversation is never brought up. It's football season. Play football. That's what we're all here to do. That's what you guys are here to do, to watch football, to cover football. That's what we do. Football is getting ready to start, 4th of August for us. We're excited about the opportunity to start, kick the season off, kick training camp off, get ready to go. That's what we're here to do.

Q. What does it mean just to be a part of the Pac-12 conference that has about four black coaches in this

conference as opposed to the other conferences that don't have that type of number? What does it mean for you to be a part of this conference?

HERM EDWARDS: Well, I think hopefully in life in general, we don't have to say that. I mean, wherever I've been as a coach, head coaching position, I've always been the first. I don't even like talking about that. Why is that, right?

I think this conference, it dates way, way back when I was in this conference, right, as a former football player, Pac-8.

It's very progressive. It gives opportunities to not only men but women. Talking about the coaches, look at the athletic directors, as well. That's just what this conference is about.

I would hope that it shouldn't be, we shouldn't be, like the odd conference. Hopefully in my lifetime, hopefully I got a little longer to go, that we shouldn't have to talk about this. This shouldn't be a subject. It should just be that's what it is. It's about what America is built on: dreams and opportunities.

I think sometimes when we get into all these other things about what it looks like, I'm not trying to disparage diversity and all that stuff, I'm just saying I grew up in the '60s. There's some things I look at right now and I reflect on and go, Why are we still doing that? We should be past that by now.

Hopefully in the next 10 or 15 years, you'll still be interviewing, these folks will still be in the audience, I'll be somewhere at home watching my daughters and hopefully they'll be married and I'll be a grandpapa, That you guys won't ask these questions, won't ask the coach these questions, or ask anybody in business this question, about, What does it feel like?

It should be normal. This should be normal. It shouldn't be a question we have to ask. That's probably the most sad part of it all, that we're still asking it in 2021. Shouldn't be a question we need to ask, quite honestly.

Q. In addition to that, what do you think are some steps that need to be taken as far as creating that opportunity for more just black and minority coaches and women coaches?

HERM EDWARDS: You just mentioned it. I mean, you're here asking the question, and I can remember when I was playing, not many people looked like you asking those questions. You were given an opportunity.

I think the thing you have to realize is when you're given an



opportunity or a platform, you got to lift other people up with you to give them opportunities. That's what life's about. When you have a little success, make sure you give back, make sure you give back to the profession you're involved in. It by itself can evolve.

That's what this thing is about, it's not about us, it's about the people that follow us and the opportunities that are provided for those folks. That's why I sit here today, I'm standing on a lot of people's shoulders, giving me the opportunity to be here.

We can never lose sight of that. It's important.

Q. I'm curious if the investigation has affected recruiting, if you've had to answer more questions from recruits or their families about the program's future?

HERM EDWARDS: You mean the review? No, it's not. It's fine.

Q. Jimmy Lake got promoted to head coach at Washington. A smile is on your face. Talk about what that means to you, your relationship with him.

HERM EDWARDS: Watching Jimmy for a long time. Well deserved. Obviously he's following a legend, Coach Petersen, who was fabulous. It's a community, they like their football up there. We have to go play 'em. We went up there our first year. It's a loud stadium, boy. Those fans are excited. I know everyone's excited now about the fan base coming back to all the stadiums in the Pac-12.

I'm happy for him. He's going to do a fantastic job up there. He understands the culture there. It's been set. He's going to continue to set it even higher.

Q. When did your relationship start with him?

HERM EDWARDS: Oh, boy, I'm getting old, man (smiling). I've known a lot of these guys when they were young. Just kind of watch them grow. It's kind of fun to watch it, to be quite honest, from afar. Watch them as young coaches, young players, they get into the coaching profession. No different in pro football, I watched a lot of guys I had the opportunity to coach, now they're in the league coaching, former players. It's always good when you see former players coming back to become coaches. That's always fun.

Q. How important is the passing game to the success of your team this year? Can you talk about Jayden's importance in that?

HERM EDWARDS: In college football, it's really shown that you have to score points, score points in college football, even pro football, through the passing game. You have to be able to throw the football.

We're built in a way where Jayden is going to have opportunities. I think for him, just listening to him and being with him, the young receivers that he played with last year, all the work they've done behind the scenes and during the spring, when spring was over with, even now. Talking earlier in the green room, telling me how those guys have progressed. He has to throw the ball, there's no doubt about that. We have to score points. You know that in this conference. You got to be in the high 30s to have a chance, right? That's just the way it is.

It's hard for a defensive guy to say that, but that's the life we live now. You got to be able to throw it.

Q. You take special pride in the secondary. Seem to have a very good one this year. Talk about expectations for that group.

HERM EDWARDS: Any secondary knows they're only as good as the pass-rush, right? How you put pressure on the quarterback. I think we've got some gifted players back there, some talented guys that can play sticky defense, that can play man-to-man, cover guys.

I think they're excited about that. Three or four of them have played together now for two or three years. They're very comfortable. The communication is what I like the most. Have to change certain things because of different looks or formations, motions.

The communication with the secondary is much cleaner than it's been. That's important. You have to communicate. You have so many different elements back there, you all have to be on the same page.

Chase is a prime example. You can just tell the way he walks around, the way he talks. He's the team captain. It's fun to watch him develop from the years I've been here to where he's at right now. I'm excited for those guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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