

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Hollywood, California, USA

## Oregon State Beavers Jonathan Smith

### Press Conference

JONATHAN SMITH: Hello, everybody. It's an exciting day. I appreciate really, I want to start with this, all of you for joining us. It's been refreshing to get back in-person face-to-face with the media that covers this great game of college football. Appreciate you coming out.

It is an exciting day because it does signify that we're about to start a season. Really looking forward to what we got going this fall. Really proud of the two individuals we got with us here, Avery Roberts and Jaydon Grant, two great leaders on our football team, have been productive players. Counting on them in a big way this fall to continue to lead our defense as we continue to progress and go.

We've got a lot of great things going on at Oregon State. Our recruiting continues to build a roster that we're proud of. What these guys are doing on and off the field. Had a great summer in regards to getting bigger, stronger, faster. The continuity we've had on our coaching staff, returning so many assistants. Headed into year four now for me, and only having two transitions over those four years, I think it's big for a place like Oregon State to have the consistency. Schematically, but also knowing our players, knowing what we're identifying in recruiting. It's helped build our roster that we're feeling very confident with.

To come into this fall and play a schedule that's always tough in this league, it's always impressive. We got together as head coaches yesterday. That room of coaches with the players that they brought, what they've got on those rosters, you got to play well in this league every Saturday to win. That's why I've loved it. I played in this league as a player 20-some-odd years ago, been around it now for a long time. I've always appreciated that about the Pac-12, that you got to play well to win.

We face great, great talent, great scheme from a variety of different coaches in this league. Really appreciative to be a part of it. Looking forward to what we've got going.

One thing I will mention is another momentum piece we



feel strongly about is that we're redoing our stadium. This will be the last time this fall that we'll play in the current Reser Stadium. Construction-demolition will begin after the season and then work through one season of cranes and building. So after that one, we head to three more years, we have a brand-new stadium that I think continues to show the momentum we got, the belief in the place, the program. It will be game changing for football, but also the athletic department itself and the university, to continue to showcase Corvallis and the great state of Oregon in a big-time stadium on Saturdays in the fall.

With that, again, appreciate you guys being here. Great to be face-to-face. I'll take any questions.

### **Q. Could you talk about the development of your quarterback.**

JONATHAN SMITH: Yeah, we feel like we've got a quarterback room that is full of some talent, it's going to be competitive this month, in training camp, starting with Tristan Gebbia. Started for us multiple games last year. Suffered an injury that was a longer-term injury that he's coming back from. Should be healthy in August here to practice. I think he's got a great skill set. Understands the scheme, good leader. Has won games for us.

We added Sam Noyer after spring ball, that has won games at quarterback in this league. Has a little bit different skill set, makes the game physical, moving his feet, bit-time arm. Anxious to work with him coming in August. Chance Nolan has started multiple games, we were really close the last couple with him as the starting quarterback. Counting on him making huge strides in his game from year one to year two. Three really good options there.

Excited about Sam Vidlak, he's a freshman for us. Had a great spring. He's going to have an opportunity this August to go. We have four healthy guys. Then Gulbranson as well that had a shoulder injury that he won't be ready for fall camp.

But in general I think competition, the cream rises to the top when you have that type of competition in August, but



also it adds to our depth as the season goes.

**Q. Oregon State, they seem to be getting so close. Finally snapped a losing streak to Oregon last season. The year before the program won more games. How close is it to getting to that next point where you can actually get to a bowl game this fall?**

JONATHAN SMITH: Yeah, I think we're really close. At the same time, it's not that easy. Like I mentioned earlier, this league is competitive. You got to play well to win. We've closed the gap quite a bit over the three years that I've been coaching.

At the same time, getting over that hump is just not that simple. So every year is new. We know we've made huge strides, we're confident in what we've got as a program. But we know we have work to do to be able to get over that hump and win all these games that are really close.

Even last year, even our two wins from last year's five games, those were tight. I mean, those could have gone either way. We had a couple really tight losses that could have gone either way. It's not easy. But I know I'm confident in these players we've got, and coaches, that we're anxious to get to work and get over that hump.

**Q. Oregon State is not necessarily known as a recruiting power nationally. You have added some pretty big players to the transfer portal this off-season. Tell me about your approach there.**

JONATHAN SMITH: The transfer portal over the last couple years has been another great avenue to add to your roster. We're going to use every avenue we can to bring talent and fit to our place.

We've had some real success with it over the last couple years, and we'll continue to do it. I still want to have a majority come from the high school level, which we've done. At the same time, this day and age in college football, there are some really good football players that have gone and for whatever reasons, different fits at different places hasn't worked, but the fit at Corvallis has been better and we're going to continue to use it.

**Q. Obviously we had some transfers come in on the receiver room. Probably eight, nine guys deep. How do you sort that out?**

JONATHAN SMITH: We've got some depth at that position. I do think we play a scheme that we're going to play three, sometimes four at a time. But it's going to be competitive in August to be the every-down receiver out there. We will substitute a decent amount, put guys in

positions where their skill sets work best.

I'm excited about having some depth at that room. You look at the experience we've got, guys coming back. You talked about some additions we've had. We have some younger talent that I think has a chance to play, too.

Commonly we'll play about six during the game. But, shoot, this year might be a little different, seven or eight.

**Q. In addition to that you have the tight ends, a growing number there, too. How do you keep everybody happy?**

JONATHAN SMITH: I know, I know. I think all those guys you're talking about in that receiver and tight end room are unselfish. They understand there's one football and sometimes their role is to get the other guy open.

But the tight end piece you brought up, with Luke Musgrave and Teagan, those two guys I think are as good as there are in this league. The combination of the two of them, with Luke playing as a true freshmen, getting his feet wet, had a really nice year, he had an awesome spring ball. He's a real threat in the pass game, got a lot better at the line of scrimmage. Teagan is a little bit flipped, physical at the line of scrimmage, got better as a pass catcher. Caught a couple touchdowns for us. Those two will be a huge piece of the offense.

**Q. Xs and Os question for you. As an offensive guy, the sport as a whole is moving towards two-down linemen on defensive fronts. You are more of a throwback in the 12 and 13 personnel usage. How do you as a head coach go about defensively or as a play-caller offensively?**

JONATHAN SMITH: That's a good question.

I do think you start on who you're going to play, so within your division and whatnot you're going to play those guys every year. You got to be able to implement and defend. But also you want to have some variety offensively to not be exact same as everybody.

I do think this game of college football is a little cyclical. You look at the schemes offensively over decades of time, sometimes it circles on back to something that was really good 20, 30 years ago.

But you want to be unique in ways. We want to do that on both sides of the ball. At the same time have your schemes be able to defend or have success against who you're playing year in and year out.

**Q. In recruiting, like the scholarship management, particularly now with the super seniors, how do you approach that in knowing how many spots you actually have for next year?**

JONATHAN SMITH: Yeah, you got to forecast a little bit. It's interesting. It's something that you find out late in the year. Yeah, we have super seniors, so you're going to lose those guys. A lot of them what you deem as juniors have played four years. Anticipating you're going to lose some of those to the NFL.

But you can't have a definitive number sitting here currently, August 1st. It's always going to be a little moving target.

**Q. Beyond forecasting, do you have to have frank conversations with your juniors, tell the true seniors about what their futures are so you don't have a crunch on the back end?**

JONATHAN SMITH: Sure.

**Q. Ultimately, beyond forecast, do you have to have a little bit more of a concrete idea?**

JONATHAN SMITH: You definitely have these conversations. These guys are thinking about it too. Am I going to play one more year and take my shot at the NFL? Where are these guys in school academically? A lot of them are going to be graduated by that point. You have conversations with those guys really before the season, which we've done even after spring ball, kind of where their head was at with things.

Ultimately they should be making these decisions after they play the season, how well this has gone, and then make the decision. Then, yeah, we got to sort some things out.

**Q. Kayvon Thibodeaux, what has it been like facing him?**

JONATHAN SMITH: Really good player. Can wreak havoc, not just in the pass game, rushing the passer. The guy can do some things against the run, really physical at the point of attack. He shows up on tape right away when you turn it on. He's a guy that you got to put a plan together for, whether you're going to pick and choose when you're going to double-team him in pass protection, pick and choose when you know you're going to leave your tackle isolated, let him go one-on-one.

They've done a good job over the last year or two of not just sitting him at the exact same spot the whole time, so

they make it tough. He's a force to be reckoned with.

**Q. About Sam Noyer, what is it that attracted you to bring him in? What has he added to your program, and your first impressions of him?**

JONATHAN SMITH: Starting with what attracted us to him. Because we took the injury, spring ball, to a quarterback, we thought about it. We need another number here. Then as he became available. Started with some of the connections with players on the team, played with him in high school, known him really well.

Coach Lindgren had recruited him when he was at Colorado, so there was a connection there, knowing a little bit of background from him.

Everything I've heard so far since he's been here has been great. You talk about a guy who loves the game, is unselfish. You can see his leadership capabilities even the short time he's been with us. So I'm really excited to see him out there on the practice field with us, using skill set that he has, not just throwing or running but also on this leadership side.

**Q. I believe Brian was his first quarterback coach in Colorado for two years. Has that familiarity made the transition easier?**

JONATHAN SMITH: I think it has. You ask those two guys in particular. Schematically, some of the way we call plays, probably brought back what he remembers from his first couple years.

**Q. Can you speak to what you may have heard from Sam about what his experience was with the academy was, what he got out of that experience?**

JONATHAN SMITH: I haven't talked to him in detail about it. I was anxious to get with him here this week. But I know he was really excited. I've had other quarterbacks go to that, I know how impressive that camp is, how much they get out of it, the side conversations besides the classroom, working out with the guys. I can't tell you in detail how he did.

**Q. One NIL question, more on the state law. I realize this is uncharted territory. The way the law reads, it could be theoretically possible that a transfer athlete who signed with a company not named Nike has a deal that spans more than a given year, that by state law if they're signed with another apparel provider, that provider says you will not play at a Nike school, state law puts you at a competitive disadvantage because you cannot recruit that player.**

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JONATHAN SMITH: Theoretically.

**Q. You are all for NIL, but there are some things...**

JONATHAN SMITH: Yeah, I feel like, at least at Oregon State, our conversations, this NIL we are for, but there's going to be a learning curve as this goes, even over the next couple of years of some of the ramifications, implications. Like even that scenario you were talking about there.

I'm not an expert of all of that in any way. But I do feel like these student-athletes should be able to benefit from their name, image and likeness.

**Q. There's been a lot of talk the last four or five days about vaccines, especially Washington State's Nick Rolovich not being vaccinated. Do you feel coaches have an obligation as leaders to be vaccinated?**

JONATHAN SMITH: I could speak to just my personal preference, Oregon State. Feel like the vaccine, it's not just a personal choice, but a choice for protecting others. At the same time it is someone's personal decision to make.

I know on our end, really proud of where we're at as a team, percentage of vaccinations, these guys buying into that idea not just for themselves, but others.

**Q. What percentage of your team is vaccinated right now?**

JONATHAN SMITH: 86.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

JONATHAN SMITH: Thank you.

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