

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Hollywood, California, USA

## Washington Huskies

### Jimmy Lake

#### Press Conference



JIMMY LAKE: Good morning, good afternoon, everybody. We're excited to be here. We're excited that we have some normalcy. It's good to see everybody's faces. The player representatives from all the other Pac-12 schools, the head football coaches, ADs, be able to shake hands, have some sense of normalcy going into the 2021 season.

We're excited. We felt like we had a really good team in 2020. We obviously all went through a very adverse situation with the pandemic. But then having our season cut short, we kept the virus out of our building for so long. As everybody can see, the coronavirus does not discriminate. Ended our season short. So there's really a sense of unfinished business with our football team.

We've had a really good off-season. Our guys have trained and had a huge chip on their shoulder for the way our season unfolded and ended in 2020. We had a few players that had a chance to go on to the National Football League but decided to come back and wear that gold Washington helmet one more time to end it the right way.

We have a bunch of returning starters on both sides of the ball. We have some tremendous depth. We still got to put in the work. We put a bunch of work in from January up until July. Now we're excited to have a very competitive August training camp and let the cream rise to the top at every single position group.

We're excited. We're ready to get to work.

**Q. What is your communication to your players on the NIL ruling? How do you approach that? How do you expect that to impact your team in the locker room?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, it's obviously a huge deal for amateurs. This has been a long time coming. I think it's a huge landscape that's unknown for a lot of entities.

But really the message to our team is we need to focus on becoming better football players, and we need to go out

there and win some football games. If we do that, all of that stuff is going to take care of itself. If we go out there and don't play very well, don't have a good team, there's not going to be a lot of people who want to pay our players for the name, image, and likeness.

My message to my team is Michael Jordan, he wasn't worried about who was sponsoring him when he was winning championships. He was worried about winning championships and let all that stuff take care of itself in the end.

I'm very proud of our team, they've stayed focused. They haven't spent their entire time trying to promote their name, image and likeness, which I'm all for our players cashing in, so to speak, on money that they're able to receive from places. If we focus on our team first, that's our culture, we focus on the team first, if we focus on the team first, all of that stuff will take care of itself.

**Q. This was your first year as a head coach. Congratulations on finishing it. What did you think about it, your first year? Did it live up to your expectations? Has it been the dream you always thought? What didn't you expect?**

JIMMY LAKE: I didn't expect a worldwide pandemic, that's for sure. I don't think any of us expected that (smiling).

But it's funny. Things prepare you for certain moments. My over 20 years coaching in a weird way prepared me for this moment of going through these challenges that we went through in 2020. I've been a part of staffs who have been fired, had to move across the country, pack my family up in a U-Haul, and move ourselves to different locations. All those ups and downs that I've gone through throughout my career prepared me and our team for the challenges that we had in 2020.

I pride myself on being prepared, always being prepared. The coronavirus really turned the whole world upside down. It was hard to be prepared for the coronavirus, the different curve balls it threw at you every single day, from planning, schedules, you name it.

But it made our team grow closer, going through something so adverse as that. Now we're excited that we can have a normal 2021 season, which I know college football fans are extremely excited about as well.

**Q. What did you like most about being a head coach in your first year?**

JIMMY LAKE: I think what I liked most is probably implementing my competitive nature. I compete at everything. My family will tell you that. Doesn't matter what we're doing, I'm always trying to win, trying to compete, trying to make everything a competition. Done that on the defensive side of the ball for all these years.

Just being able to get that competitive nature now to our special teams, to our offense, have that same philosophy that we compete at everything, that we play a tough, physical, smart brand of football in all three phases. That was probably the thing I was excited about, is making sure that competitive juice and competitive nature was throughout our whole team.

Thank you.

**Q. It's been a struggle at times for Pac-12 schools to keep the best players out West in terms of recruiting in recent years. What is UDub's strategy and your strategy in trying to keep the best players out West?**

JIMMY LAKE: This isn't something new. Back in the early 2000s when Pete Carroll was making his run at USC, Texas with Mack Brown, winning national championships, they did a good job of recruiting other parts of the country. It's so funny, back then no one was saying how USC was stealing guys from the Northeast and from the South. It wasn't a news story.

But I get it. We're one conference out West. We're representing the whole country out here out West. It's probably a bigger story than it needs to be.

I think every single year there's going to be players that leave our footprint, but there's also going to be players that stayed, just like there has been for decades.

I know this, the National Football League loves our players, especially the University of Washington. Nobody has had more NFL Draft picks since 2014 than the University of Washington. We believe the players we have selected and developed and trained, we wouldn't want anybody else to sign with us. We feel like we're pinpointing the right guys. I think some other teams in our conference can say the same thing.

I think it is a fantasy world to think that every player from the state of California, from the state of Washington, Oregon, Arizona, is just going to stay here right in our footprint. Just like it's a fantasy for players in the Southeast are going to stay there. They're going to go up to the Midwest, they're going to go to the Northeast, they're going to come out West. That's just the nature of recruiting and nature of college football. It's exciting to have these different players from different parts of the country play in different footprints.

**Q. The Pac-12 is leading all Power 5 conferences with four African American head coaches. How does that make you feel being an African American coach, being a part of this league?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, no, it's really special. Our states are really at the forefront of being ahead. I think of how in the future hopefully all of our conferences are that way. They are more diverse. I think the Pac-12 has been at the head of that.

But my focus is just being successful and doing this job the best I can so more people that look like me, that have a background like me, can get these opportunities to become a coordinator and to become a head coach.

So it is special, but at the same time I don't wake up every day thinking about it. I wake up every day thinking about how we can make the University of Washington one of the best teams in the country. Then I know the aftereffects of that will be people that do look like me will get these opportunities in the future.

**Q. On the idea of recruiting from different regions, you are in Texas pretty consistently, have been for several years now. Not a whole lot in the Southeast or in the South. What are the challenges of a program like Washington trying to establish itself in different regions? Do you think you need to do that to be the program you want to be?**

JIMMY LAKE: I don't think we need to do that. I think there's always special cases where we can go outside of our footprint where there's a connection. We've actually had players that are Washington football fans, their dream was to play at Washington. If there's a special connection like that, for sure.

But we feel there's enough talent in the footprints that we currently recruit in to win the Pac-12 and be on that national stage, which we've been on. Now we just have to make sure we win those football games we've been in, those three New Year's 6 games in a row that we went to for 2016 to 2018. We need to take that next step and win

those football games.

When we do that, there won't be all this talk we need to go recruit way outside of our footprint, all those things.

Again, I go back to the proof's in the pudding of the best football in the world, the National Football League, loves our players. They love our players from our team. I go back to our recruiting department, our coaches selecting the right players and our strength and conditioning department making sure that they develop these players the right way.

But there's always going to be -- what I never want to do is take my attention somewhere way far away and then miss out on the players that are right around us. We've been very, very successful with the players that are on our current footprint. But we never want to handcuff ourselves. If there is somebody that is outside our footprint and we have a special need, we will go get those guys, for sure.

**Q. With your first season being so short, how do you approach year two now that you do get a full slate of games?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, it's been exciting. Exciting having a normal off-season. From January to now, to be around our team, for the coronavirus protocols to be less because we're close to 95, over 95% vaccinated. Our staff is 100% vaccinated. In our building, it's business as it used to be before 2020.

I'm extremely excited. Spring football was awesome, to watch all the competition going on at every single position group, the offense against the defense. Having fans back in the stands was awesome during spring football. We were able to open it up. Not playing in front of cardboard cutouts was really special for our team. It brought more juice to practice.

So now we're extremely excited about having a normal training camp, again opening up, having the media and fans come and watch us play. It's been a long time. The Seattle area loves their football. They want to come see us, I know that. We're going to allow those guys to come and see us. We can't wait to go out there in that first game September 4th, with a packed Husky Stadium, show Husky Nation what the 2021 UDub football team is all about.

**Q. There's been a lot of discussion about vaccines, especially in the wake of Coach Rolovich saying he's not vaccinated. Do you think coaches have an obligation to be vaccinated?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, I think what we did at Washington is

we brought in experts. We brought in experts that are way smarter than me, doctors that went to school maybe quadruple the amount of time I went to school. What we did was we brought these men and women in to talk to our team, to talk to our staff as well, talk about what the vaccine means, the positives, the negatives.

After all the information that we received, it was beyond -- it was 100% that you should go get this vaccine, it is the best thing to do to end the pandemic and protect your safety. That was the information we received from some really smart people, some really smart doctors.

In Seattle we were at the forefront. Our doctors were at the forefront of attacking this pandemic for the whole world. We were very thankful to be able to bring those doctors in.

But at the end of the day it is a decision. It's an individual decision for anybody, whether they want to get the vaccine or not. I think the information our team heard, that our staff heard, it was overwhelming evidence the best thing to end this pandemic and to protect yourself and your family and your friends, it was to get the vaccine. So I'm extremely pleased where we are 100% of our staff is vaccinated, and 95, over 95% of our team is vaccinated.

**Q. You just announced bringing on Kevin Carroll to add an advisor role. What is his presence going to bring to you and how would you describe what his role will be with the program?**

JIMMY LAKE: Kevin first spoke to our team I believe back in 2017. Just left a huge impression on our staff and our players. Two guys I'll point out, Dante Pettis, who now plays for the New York Giants, Myles Bryant who now plays for the New England Patriots, I know they really latched on to KC. We call him KC.

He's a motivator. He's a catalyst. He puts a spark in you. He's extremely smart. He's extremely engaging. He's going to be a huge help to me. He's already been a huge help to me.

We brought him in to speak to our team again this off-season. I believe it was in March. The overwhelming impact that he had on our team again, it was even twice what he did the first time around. I knew that I wanted this man around our team.

To be able to hire him as a special advisor to me, but also a resource for our players and our staff, it's going to be game changing. He's going to be around our team weekly. We will have him on speed dial, our players and myself included. So we are extremely, extremely excited to add Kevin Carroll to our staff.

**Q. Bringing Bookie in, what has his presence been like?**

JIMMY LAKE: It's been awesome to watch. We're so thankful that he decided to come to the University of Washington. He's coming in with the right mindset. He fits right into our culture. We love players that are all about hard work and competing. That's exactly what he's done as soon as he stepped foot on campus.

He had big-time spring football. Made a bunch of plays. But really became a leader for our team throughout the course of spring football because everyone saw the work that he was putting in in the film room. The first thing he did, he grabbed Trent McDuffie and some of our players and said, I want to learn your defense inside and out, I want to watch film with you guys. Our guys are already big film watchers. He watched a bunch of film with those guys.

Then to go out there and work as hard as he did in the weight room, then out there on the football field making plays. Always talking about football. He's a Dawg, simple as that. We talk about what Dawgs are, they're big-time people but also big-time football players.

This guy loves football, high football character, a great person. You can already tell he's going to make a bunch of plays for us. He's a leader for us. He's going to energize our stadium when he does it.

We are very thankful that Bookie decided to come to the University of Washington.

**Q. You have Dyson, Zakhari, and Vince. How have you seen them ingratiate themselves into the room?**

JIMMY LAKE: You said Vince Nunley and Zakhari Spears, is that what you said?

**Q. Yes.**

JIMMY LAKE: Those guys just came in like a normal freshman would come in during the summertime. They have taken all the classes to prepare them for college. They've been in the weight room. We are not allowed to be around those guys very much. We didn't get a look at them like if they were able to play spring football.

All indications are from the players, they're fitting right in. They love football. They're learning everything. They've done a good job in the weight room training. But I'll have way more input once we get into training camp and we get to see those guys operate, we actually get to coach them in training camp. I'll have a better answer for you then on

those three true freshmen that joined us on June 18th.

**Q. On recruiting, you got to host kids again, how different was that? Did you change anything? Anything different you learned in the past year that you implemented in that?**

JIMMY LAKE: No, it was an exciting time. These guys have been waiting for so long. The players, the prospects, for going to visit these places they've dreamed about. It was a really exciting time for the players and their families to get on campus, to see what they saw virtually on Zoom for that last almost year and a half. But to be able to see it in person, be able to shake hands, see Husky Stadium, see our campus, meet with our professors, our strength and conditioning staff. It was an awesome time.

It was very, very busy, as you can imagine. We had a bunch of unofficial visitors, of course also official visitors. It was an exciting time. It felt normal. I think that's what we all want right now, is a normal year. So I was excited for those prospects to be able to do that not only at our place but to be able to go see the other places. That's what we want, for them to see all the other places. Hopefully they come back around and say, You know what, I want to go to UDub. UDub was the best one.

**Q. What do you think about the 12-team College Football Playoff proposal?**

JIMMY LAKE: The positive thing is we're adding more teams in the fold. I'm sure our local media know, I had a six-game playoff. I would rather keep it more tight. I think there's only a select few teams that really should be up for the national championship. You think of decades and decades of college football before there was even a Playoff, it usually came down to one or two teams. You knew 12-0, 11-1, whatever it is.

To open up to 12, hey, that's a positive step in the right direction. Let's take the subjectivity out of it, take the voting out of it, let's let it be settled in between the white lines.

To open it up to 12 teams is phenomenal for college football. The worst phrase I hate to hear, I'm sure we're going to hear it again, the eye test, the eye test. How about the field test, how about a team going against a team and who is going to come out the other side and win the football game. Let's have that happen.

Let's take the subjectivity out of it, let it be settled on the football field. Opening up to 12 teams will be great as long as we're well represented across the country.



**Q. The sport is going to a lot of two down lines.**

JIMMY LAKE: I'm sorry?

**Q. A lot of two down defensive lines as a sport. The division, yourselves included, still very pro style, 12, 13, 22. How do you go about defensively managing where the sport is going?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, no, that's college football, that's college football for decades. You see so many different types of offenses that you have to defend. That's the beauty of this thing. It changes from week-to-week.

We've done a good job over the years of being able to be successful against the pro style, against an up-tempo, an air raid, against a spread. Every single week it's going to be different. We're able to deploy defenses to handle that.

You're right, our conference, you're seeing more of a smash mouth, two tight end, three tight end with more teams now. So now, defense we have to react on defense. If that's what we're seeing from the offensive side of the ball in our opponents, we need to be able to react and deploy our defense accordingly to stop that offense.

I think it's an awesome challenge. I love how diverse it is in our conference and in college football. Had experience in the National Football League. Sometimes it's very cookie cutter. Everyone is running basically the same thing. They copy each other. It all looks the same.

I love the diversity of college football and the offenses that you have to stop.

**Q. Because so much is heading in one direction, where do you draw inspiration, solutions, for a style that is not being run at the pro level, outside of the Pac-12 and a handful of option teams?**

JIMMY LAKE: Yeah, I mean, we do studies, I do studies, our defensive staff does studies, on defenses in college and the NFL every single year. We are always pulling things. We can go back in history of what we've done when we saw this certain type of offense years ago.

It's really cool. We'll be game planning, and watching. Yeah, I remember 10 years ago, this is very, very similar. We go back, blow the cobwebs off that playbook, we know what works against this. We'll now have a few little variables, wrinkles that we'll add in there. But it's not too often that we're surprised by anything that we see. We've seen it all now.

I give a lot of respect to Chip Kelly. Chip Kelly changed

football back at Oregon when they were going up-tempo. Changed high school, college, and the NFL football. Now you see a lot of teams still doing a little bit of those things he was doing back then.

I think that was the last major shift in offensive football, what he was doing there at the University of Oregon, however many years ago that is now. But currently you haven't seen a change in offensive style, I have not seen a change in offensive style of football, to that height, the way that he changed football almost a decade ago.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

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