

# PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Thursday, October 12 2017

## Larry Scott Pac-12 Conference

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Good morning, and welcome to Pac-12 Men's Basketball Media Day. It's great to see such a good turnout here, and we're looking forward to an excellent day.

As I think you just heard, we're missing a couple of our coaches from Oregon, Oregon State and student-athletes at the moment due to the wildfires that we've seen through the Pacific Northwest, and now we're dealing with here in California, north and south as well. So I just want to say our hearts and prayers go out to all that are being affected by those fires. We're looking forward to being joined by our colleagues from Oregon later this morning.

As has been my custom, I'll start off Media Days with comments about the basketball season and also share some reflections on the bigger picture of what's going on in collegiate athletics and particularly basketball at the moment.

When I met with you at Media Day last year, we were coming off of arguably the most successful season we had ever had with seven teams making the NCAA Tournament and a lot of optimism about growing from there. I think the '16-'17 season delivered on that for us in that we hit some additional milestones. We had three teams with 30-win seasons, the first time we've had that, and we're the only conference in the country that had three 30-win teams. We had three teams end the year in the Top 10. Our Pac-12 teams had the second best win percentage and the third most overall wins in the NCAA Tournament.

So as conference commissioner, what I always look for is great depth in the conference, but also elite teams at the top, and with Oregon making the Final Four last year, that was another great milestone, first Pac-12 team to have done that since 2008.

As a conference, I'm optimistic about this season, and building upon that momentum even further, the trajectory of our conference in men's basketball has been absolutely going in the right direction. We've got great continuity amongst our coaches and some exciting new coaches, strong roster of returning players.



In fact, one of the things I love about our coaches is every single one of them, all 12 were collegiate basketball players themselves. How many conferences have two coaches that were national champions as collegiate players? Steve Alford and Bobby Hurley. So we've truly got an elite and very impressive group of college coaches.

We have 30 starters returning to Pac-12 teams, including three that were recognized last year as All-Conference players, and, as I mentioned, we've got a great, young, talented group of incoming players that will make an immediate impact.

Expecting it to be very competitive throughout the season, and just delighted with how our season ends at the T-Mobile Arena, in Las Vegas, which I think has become the most exciting conference tournament in the country in a few short years.

Last year was the first year in the T-Mobile Arena, and we were delighted to have set new attendance records for the Pac-12 Tournament in just our first year with sellout sessions. It's become one of the hottest tickets certainly in Las Vegas, in college basketball.

We're certainly mindful and our hearts have gone out to our friends in Las Vegas as well with you all and the rest of the country. We certainly share the shock and grief of what happened there recently. We've got great friends in Las Vegas -- Las Vegas Events, MGM Grand. We work with many different people down there, and we're working with them. We'll find an appropriate way to express our support for the victims and the families of the terrible tragedy that just happened there when we go to Las Vegas in March.

Coming back to Pac-12 Conference play, the success and trajectory of the conference is certainly resulting in more fan interest. And we're seeing positive spikes and new records set in terms of the interest level. We hit a new milestone last year with the average attendance at Pac-12 basketball arenas at 9,000, on average, per game, which is obviously a great milestone, critically important to see.

Beyond that, we hit various records in terms of our TV ratings for Pac-12 men's basketball last year. And there is no conference that televises more basketball

than the Pac-12. We'll have 224 games on television this year -- 70 combined between ESPN, FOX, and CBS, and 150 live games on the Pac-12 Networks.

We've got an amazing platform for Pac-12 men's basketball, not just in terms of the live events, but in terms of the studio shows, the student-athlete storytelling, a lot of the shoulder programming that goes around the Pac-12 Networks has truly become a place for the college basketball fan and certainly Pac-12 fans.

Sitting here today, if you look at the TV platform that's been created and the partnerships we've got as well as our tournament at the end of the season, as I look out there, there are many of you that have followed Pac-12 basketball before it was Pac-12, Pac-10. You realize we've come an awfully long way in terms of the quality and extent of our TV exposure and our end-of-the-year season championship. So it's great to see the platforms having been elevated so much for Pac-12 basketball.

On the networks front, there have been a lot of positive developments that have gone on as well. I think you saw earlier this week we announced an extension of the talent agreements. We've got a great group of talent that are helping fans follow Pac-12 basketball during the year, extended agreements with Bill Walton, Don MacLean, Guy Haberman, JB Long, Kate Scott, Kevin O'Neill, Mary Murphy, Ros Gold-Onwude, and others, doing a great job to bring Pac-12 basketball to our fans.

Also announcing today that New York Life has extended their presenting sponsorship of not just our men's, but our women's basketball tournaments and other Olympic sports through the Pac-12. So we've got nice continuity with a great partner there.

Speaking of continuity and partners seeing a lot of value in re-upping, I'm also announcing today an extension of our distribution agreement with the NCTC, the National Cable Television Cooperative, which represents 800 different distributors throughout the country. Some big ones, some smaller ones. This is a critically important distribution partnership because of the number of distributors that are encompassed by this agreement.

Some of the bigger ones that are part of the NCTC are CenturyLink, Suddenlink, and Frontier, along with many smaller ones throughout our footprint and nationally.

This follows the extension we announced last year with Dish. So all of our major distribution partners have now extended long-term deals with the Pac-12 Network, which is very healthy and positive signal of

the value that Pac-12 Networks is creating amongst fans, our distribution partners, and advertisers around us. So very healthy signs around Pac-12 basketball generally, our tournament, and our media platforms.

Once again, we're going to open our regular season in a novel way with a tipoff event in Shanghai, China. We're the only collegiate or professional league to play a regular season game in China, and it's gone very well.

I'm proud of the educational and cultural opportunities this has provided for our student-athletes as part of the Pac-12 global initiative. And this year's game, featuring UCLA and Georgia Tech, promises to be memorable. Not just in terms of what happens on the court, but the experiences that our student-athletes have off the court as well.

Last week we announced an extension and expansion of one of our more important strategic partnerships with Alibaba, one of the leading internet companies not just in China, but in the world. Alibaba will not only continue as presenting sponsor of the Pac-12 China game, but as an extension of the relationship, they'll be distributing 175 live events across many sports to the Chinese public throughout the year.

So, again, there is no collegiate conference out there that's got the breadth and depth of exposure internationally as well as the opportunity to provide these experiences for student-athletes. We're excited about what this means for the interest in our schools, the interest in the Pac-12 around the world.

Before I turn the program over to our coaches and student-athletes who I know you're here to hear from, I definitely want to address the news that's been out there in collegiate basketball around the indictments that were handed down against a number of college basketball figures, including two assistant coaches in the Pac-12, along with the NCAA's announcement yesterday of the formation of a commission on college basketball.

Protection of our student-athletes and of the integrity of collegiate sports are our most important priorities. The F.B.I. charges that we've all read are deeply troubling, not just to myself and to the conference, but to all of our schools. We have to use this moment to take a closer look and more careful look at what's going on in the sport of college basketball and our collegiate athletic programs more generally and make sure that they're being operated in compliance, not just with NCAA rules, but with the law.

For this reason, I really applaud and welcome the NCAA's decision to announce the Commission on

College Basketball that they announced yesterday, chaired by Stanford's Dr. Condoleezza Rice. This commission is going to examine many aspects of what's going on in collegiate basketball and the role of outside groups that have influence, such as apparel companies, agents, non-scholastic basketball programs, and the role of the professional leagues -- in this case, the NBA.

This national commission will make recommendations to the membership on ways to improve the system for our student-athletes and our schools.

We look forward to being actively engaged as a conference in supporting that initiative, which we hope will very quickly focus on actionable steps, to learn from the information that's out there and to look to improve college basketball, which is very important to the country and important to student-athletes, important to our schools.

At the same time, at the Pac-12, announcing today that we're going to be forming our own task force to address issues that are threatening the integrity of collegiate athletics and to protect our student-athletes. Our Pac-12 Task Force will support and supplement the NCAA's national effort. But we're going to take advantage of the expertise and the knowledge that we've got directly and indirectly through our conference, from coaches to athletics administrators, former student-athletes. We're close to members of the shoe and apparel companies that are based out here in the West, to others involved in collegiate basketball -- agents, folks associated with the AAU, and all of those that are involved in the pathway from youth and high school and AAU basketball to college and to the NBA.

Importantly, our task force is going to look at the issues raised by the F.B.I. investigation and do deep dives into the culture and issues around recruitment and men's college basketball, but, more broadly, at related issues and examine how some of the things we've seen in basketball could potentially impact other sports. This is particularly the case when it comes to recruitment in other sports where we're increasingly seeing trends, more and more influence and involvement from third parties.

Our Pac-12 Task Force will have four clear mandates that they'll be working on. The first is to help educate our university leadership -- presidents, chancellors, athletics directors -- the conference as a whole, in terms of the overall environment and landscape in basketball, and to help identify the issues and learn as much as we can from what's been going on.

Secondly, the task force will develop a

recommendations and best practices for Pac-12 schools and Pac-12 leadership, as we look at our programs going forward and look to shore up and tighten up our procedures, our policies, and the overall environment around college sports at Pac-12 schools so our schools can continue to be on the forefront of how they operate their programs.

Third, our task force will develop specific proposals that will be made to the NCAA to support the work the NCAA basketball commission is doing. Proposals have to come from somewhere. We think we have a very unique vantage point and ability to provide a leadership role in helping the NCAA do its important work nationally as they consider national rules changes, policy changes, et cetera.

Lastly, in analyzing all these issues, we expect to bring forward proposals to apply the task force's learnings to address recruiting issues that may exist in other sports where the influence of third parties is growing.

We're in the process of developing the roster that will be on our task force. We expect to have 10 to 12 members of it. This morning I'm announcing the first five members of the task force, a combination of inside administrators and outsiders with a very direct and relevant experience and perspective on what's happening in the environment.

Two of our athletics directors, Dan Guerrero and Chris Hill, Dan from UCLA and Chris from Utah, have both served on the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee. Danny has been chair of the committee, and he's also been head of the NCAA's Basketball Oversight Committee.

Former football student-athlete, NFL professional athlete and FOX Sports analyst Charles Davis will be on our task force. Highly respected collegiate administrator Tom Jernstedt, who ran the NCAA Tournament and oversaw college basketball for the NCAA for many years, will be on our task force. And our own Mike Montgomery, former Stanford and Cal coach. He's legendary Hall of Fame Coach Mike Montgomery, not just because you're standing there, but Mike more importantly is also serving on the NCAA Basketball Commission. And this will give us an important link to the national effort with our local effort again.

Again, these are the first five that we've appointed. I think you'll see from the other folks that get appointed, it will be a combination of insiders and people that come with a fresh, outside perspective and have a unique and very relevant vantage point, practitioners and other very close and knowledgeable observers to what's happening in the collegiate athletics landscape

and recruiting in particular.

The task force supported by the conference office will ultimately report their findings to our athletics directors and ultimately our COO group by the end of the first quarter of next year, and we will share the results with the NCAA Basketball Commission and other collegiate leaders as appropriate.

We believe strongly in the educational mission of collegiate athletics. We're highly concerned by the issues that have been exposed and its impact on all the great things that happen for student-athletes as part of college sports.

We're going to be part of developing specific and concrete reform measures nationally and within our own conference to ensure that the great benefits of collegiate athletics remains strong for many years to come for our current 7,000 student-athletes and many more that will follow in the years ahead.

Thank you for being here. I wish you a great day, and I'm happy to take a few questions before our coaches and student-athletes come up to the podium.

**Q. You have no women on that committee, and there's lots of moms that raise a lot of these players who ultimately get money to go to certain schools. Do you plan to put any women and maybe any moms on that committee?**

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Certainly plan to have women on the committee. Today we announce the first few, but it's certainly not the complete list yet. Hadn't really thought about the mom's issue, but that's a great point, and we'll think about that.

**Q. My second question is since you've come into the Pac-12, obviously, the conference has become much bigger on a national scale, has a much larger footprint, and there's been a huge influx of money. Coaches are paid obscene amounts of money to win. Do you think that people are paid too much; that there's too much pressure on coaches to win and that's why sometimes they feel like they need to do something illegal?**

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Well, I certainly expect that the task force is going to examine that issue. I think it's a valid concern and question, and part of the reason for creating the task force is to look at not just the rules and the environment and the influence of third parties, but I think to have a fair self-examination of the culture.

When I reference what I expect -- certain things that will be national in scope. Like you look at rule changes and reform, that is not something the Pac-12 can control. But I certainly expect -- the reason why we

created Pac-12 Task Force is also to make sure our schools have the benefit of a full examination and discussion of these topics so that we can improve and learn, just within the Pac-12, and share best practices. Part of that I expect to be how those coaches get hired, incentives in contracts, the culture and the pressures that exist around it.

Those aren't national in scope. Those are institutional in scope. That's why I think it's an important role for our task force to examine things from a Pac-12 perspective.

The culture of this conference is really a focus of trying to do things the right way. We've got some of the most elite academic institutions in the country, and we're the most successful all-around athletic conference in the country.

So I think we are kind of at the top of the pyramid in terms of the balance between academics and athletics and trying to do things the right way. That's the standard our presidents and chancellors hold their universities to, hold us to at the conference office. That's why we want to have the examination, which needs to include the culture.

**Q. Can you address what you or the Pac-12 Conference -- the conversations you might be having with Cal and Stanford right now related to the air quality because of the fires, whether there is any discussion about possibly postponing games this weekend? Where's that at right now?**

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Yeah, we have been and are, as we speak, in active discussions with Stanford and Cal administrators. Sadly, we've been through this drill for the last few weeks with the Oregon schools and the Washington schools around football games and other games as we had fire issues and smoke issues up in the Pacific Northwest. So throughout the week we've been in touch.

The thing I'd say that we've learned is these are day-by-day situations given the way the wind is blowing and how these fires progress and the impact on smoke. One day can be vastly different.

The schools are in touch with local authorities. They have policies and procedures in place. We are certainly consulting with them and looking at contingency planning if an event can't be played. But the highest priority will be on the health and well-being of student-athletes and fans.

**Q. I wondered, in light of the F.B.I. investigation, if you've had any thoughts on or if you've reconsidered your view on amateurism, and**

**specifically on whether a free-market system might be worth considering to address some of these issues.**

COMMISSIONER SCOTT: Actually what I've read has reconfirmed why the collegiate model and the amateur model is so important, and we absolutely don't want more of what we've seen infiltrating college athletics. I believe strongly that college athletics should be about education, first and foremost; that the system should be designed for the 98% of student-athletes who are not going to have a career in professional sports afterwards; that we do our best to support them to the fullest extent possible.

But none of this has changed my view. We do not want student-athletes coming to our schools to earn a living. We want them to learn the skills and get the education and have the platform so that they can earn a living and be successful in life afterwards. So it's a pathway, not a destination.