

# Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, October 12 2017

## Dana Altman Oregon



DANA ALTMAN: Another year. We have a lot of new faces on our ball team this year. Got big shoes to fill. We've had a good past few years because of Dillon Brooks, the Conference Player of the Year last year, Jordan Bell, Casey Benson, three guys that have been with us for three years. Dylan Ennis, Chris Boucher, two guys that were seniors last year. So we've got a lot of big shoes to fill this year.

We've got a young team. I do like our talent. I do like the guys that we brought in. A number of the returners have worked awfully hard to put themselves in a position to play a bigger role on our team this year.

The six new guys that we have will all play a role. Two graduate transfers, Elijah Brown and MiKyle McIntosh, will be a big, big part of our team because of their experience and their talent. And the four freshmen are talented and I think will all be able to step right in and give us some minutes as freshmen.

### **Q. I heard you guys took a private plane here today with Oregon State.**

DANA ALTMAN: Yeah, we ran into problems. Our flight was really late last night, so we were not able to get through security, and didn't get a really late flight last night, around midnight. We took a private plane in today.

### **Q. You came in with Oregon State on the same plane?**

DANA ALTMAN: Yeah. That was hard to do, but it worked out all right.

### **Q. How big of a plane was it?**

DANA ALTMAN: No, no, it was the Pathay (phonetic) family from Eugene hooked us up pretty good. We had an eight-passenger plane that brought us down. So the six of us could survive. We had plenty of room.

### **Q. Was there much conversation?**

DANA ALTMAN: Sure, no, no, we talked last night at the airport for a long time. You know, a new student, Drew, and Wayne, we've golfed together and spent time together. So we had a good time. Talked a little basketball, talked a little recruiting, so it was an easy trip.

### **Q. You've rebuilt rosters on the fly many times before in your career. Any additional challenges this year compared to previous ones?**

DANA ALTMAN: No, not really. I think we're very fortunate again to get two grad transfers that moved up. All our grad transfers that we've been fortunate enough to get have all been guys that want to try it.

The Power Five schools want to kind of -- Elijah being from New Mexico and MiKyle from Illinois State, you know, just wanted to see how it would go. So it's been really easy getting those guys adjusted because of their maturity and the fact that they've been there, done that before. So that's been pretty easy.

And the four freshmen have all worked pretty hard. So they've been easy to blend in. So it's going to take some time, November and December. I wouldn't get real comfortable if you're sitting in the first couple rows because the ball may be coming at you.

But other than that, I think eventually they'll blend together and be a pretty good team. But they're going to have to work awfully hard and give up some of the things they think are important, to do some of the things that are important for the team.

### **Q. Is there any secret to building on-court or off-court chemistry when you have that many new players coming in at the same time?**

DANA ALTMAN: I don't think so. I think guys, you know, they want to be successful. They want to be part of the team. All 351 teams want to go to the NCAA Tournament. So it's just a willingness on their part, a maturity on their part to make sacrifices for the team. Every guy has got to do that. I'm hoping this group will be like the last seven that we've had at Oregon, all the 16 I had at Creighton, that they're willing to do that.

I think their talent level is pretty good. I'm a little worried about our toughness. Little worried about our focus at times. But I'm not questioning their talent.

### **Q. Does the fact that you've had success rebuilding rosters rather quickly at Oregon, is that something you can look back on as you look forward to this year and kind of build on that success?**

DANA ALTMAN: Every team's different. I think you

really take a chance doing that. Every group dynamic, every team is different. The individuals that make up that team, everybody's different. So I don't think that will help us.

I think what does help us is the fact that we do have five guys returning that are part of a team that won 34 games, you know. So 33 games, 33 games, and hope to win 34 if we get there. But 33 games. I think they want to continue that, so I think they'll give us great leadership.

**Q. What are your expectations for Pritchard this year?**

DANA ALTMAN: I think Payton will have a heck of a year. I really do. He's worked awfully hard in the off-season. He's much more comfortable this year. A year ago, you know, like any freshman, just moving away from home. A lot of anxiety about making the jump. He's such a competitor and wants to be successful.

I thought he had a summer full of anxiety and a fall full of anxiety, wanting to be successful and making that jump. Not sure he was going to be. But I think he's worked through all of that. I think he'll have a great year for us.

**Q. What made you decide to recruit Elijah?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, first of all, we knew we were going to be losing a lot of good scorers, and he had scored very well. We do have to improve his efficiency. His shooting percentages, his assist-to-turnover ratio have to improve.

But I think he's a very gifted offensive player. We recruited him out of high school. We looked at him out of high school when he went to Butler. So we knew he was a great basketball player, obviously a great family. So we knew he was a great fit for us. You know, he went to Iowa State and Gonzaga and some programs, and he felt like we were a good fit for him.

**Q. Going back to Payton, anything on your radar, and what were your initial impressions of him?**

DANA ALTMAN: Oh, heck, he popped on to our radar, I don't know, 8th grader, freshman. Won four state titles, so everybody knew about him. He was in our camp. He came to our camp, our team camp every year. He's always been in our team camp.

So we were very aware of him. Followed his career, four state championships, as I said, and really always appreciated his game.

**Q. Talk about are you a little anxious (indiscernible)?**

DANA ALTMAN: Oh, he's confident, but he's so

competitive. You know, he's so driven to be successful, that creates anxiety. When you set your standards very high and try to achieve those standards, there's always going to be some anxiety, and he experienced that last year, I think, because of the unknown. Making that adjustment to college.

But this year I think he's a little more comfortable. We are expecting more from him in the ways of leadership, especially through November and December, till we get a lot of guys on the page with what we're doing. I think he's going to have a big role, a tremendous role of trying to get everybody on the same page.

**Q. In programs where often players are one-and-done, are you trying to build and (indiscernible)?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, we've never had a one-and-done. Jordan and Dillon were three-and-dones, and Tyler was a two-and-done. We've never been fortunate enough to have a one-and-done. But it does change over the roster a little quicker, and it does present some challenges. Again, we're fortunate to get a couple grad transfers that I think can help us fill that role.

**Q. I brushed by you at the NBA Summer League. You didn't know me, so I didn't stop. Tell me about that experience of having your players playing in the NBA, and how you prepare them for the draft and getting ready for that. Do you feel there is anything special that you do?**

DANA ALTMAN: No, I'm just so proud of those guys. We've got four guys now -- Chris and Jordan are with Golden State, Dillon is with Memphis, and Tyler is with Atlanta. Joe, who played for us a couple years ago, Joe Young, is with Indiana. So going to have a lot of teams to follow this year. Hopefully the guys will do very well.

I was excited. I was awfully proud of them, the way they handled themselves this summer. The fact that all of them got guaranteed contracts and are doing well really speaks a lot about them and how competitive they are and how they've all improved their game.

None of them were projected out of high school to develop like that. But they all worked awfully hard. Because of that, I think they should all feel really good about where they're at right now. Because it's taken us to 90 wins in three years like they did, an Elite Eight and a Final Four. It was a great group of guys.

**Q. What was your surprise coming out of the tournament, not talking about win-loss, but just the whole experience?**

DANA ALTMAN: I was very pleased. Little surprised with how well we played without Chris Boucher. He was such a big part of our team. To see Jordan Bell,

Dillon Brooks, Dylan Ennis, everybody step up a little bit and play a little bit better. We made some adjustments on what we did offensively and defensively, and those guys picked that up right away. So that was gratifying.

Anytime you lose a one-point game, that sticks with you a little bit longer, so that's been a little tough to get over. But I think it was a great experience for our players. Definitely was for our staff, and I think our fans enjoyed it.

So one of those things that I hope we don't have to wait 70-some, 80-some years again, 90, however many years it was, to get back. But it was a lot of fun.

**Q. As far as chemistry, do you feel that comes from the team, or do you do certain things to get the new players in and get them all bonded?**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, we've always done a little training program with the military. We've done that, I guess, every year since we've been here. It's just a little two-day exercise where they put them through the paces pretty good. They're a little burned out after two days. A lot of team building there and leadership, trying to bring out leadership with guys.

I think that's been really good for us. Our guys live together. They spend a lot of time together. So you just hope that that chemistry develops. There is no guarantee, but you hope that you recruit the right guys. You hope that they mature.

It's hard, sometimes, for freshmen because they've been the stars of their high school teams, but they have to sacrifice a little bit when they come to college ball and play with a bunch of high school stars and stars from other programs. But, fortunately, we've had good guys that have been willing to do that. It makes it a lot easier to coach.

**Q. Elijah was kind of a pass-first guy at New Mexico. Have you kind of told him to -- how has he adjusted to kind of the pass style?**

DANA ALTMAN: He's been great to work with. I think that he's always been a big-time scorer, Mater Dei and in college, and we'll need him to score. We lost some pretty good scorers. Our five league scorers -- Payton was actually sixth on our team. So we lost our five leading scorers, so we're going to have to get him to score.

But we want him to do it a little bit more efficiently than he has in the past. He's been a pretty good passer, but his turnover ratio we hope to get a little bit better.

But he's really worked hard. He's been easy to work

with. His efficiency in practice is continuing to improve. He's cutting down his turnovers. He's very coachable. He's been really easy to work with, and I'm sure his dad has got that into him over the years.

But I think he's going to be a big part of our team. I think he's going to have a great year. If he stays healthy. He's had a little problem with the hamstring throughout his career, and I think if we can not be bothered by that, I think he's going to have a big-time year.

**Q. I'm curious what you think about Oregon being chosen fourth in the Pac-12.**

DANA ALTMAN: Well, you know, it doesn't matter. Last year I think was the first year that they got us right. So, you know, we hopefully will have a good year. We'll see where it all ends up.

But it's a big challenge for our team. Arizona, USC, both returned a lot of players. UCLA has a great blend of returning players and new guys. Stanford, with all the players they have returning. And Oregon State, they've got four really good scorers and guys that started for them last year, maybe they'll be coming off the bench this year. So to think they could be a surprise team.

Colorado and Utah are always competitive. And Arizona State, their guards, a dangerous team. And we have three teams that are major transition with Washington, Cal, and Washington State with personnel that they lost. So those three teams are kind of mystery teams.

But I think it's going to be another great year for our league. Arizona definitely the team to beat. I think they have a great chance. You hate to put pressure on a team, but their blend of returners and new guys is something that has been successful in the previous years.

You look at Villanova and North Carolina and some of the teams that have previously won the title, they've had a great blend of vets with new guys. That seems to be the case with Arizona and USC. Two very talented teams. And again, UCLA, with that blend of talent and the returners, I think it will be an interesting team.