

# PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Thursday, October 11 2018

## Larry Scott

Pac-12 Commissioner

LARRY SCOTT: Good morning. Delighted to see a great group here for what promises to be an exciting Pac-12 men's basketball day. I want to thank the media for your attendance, and, of course, thank our coaches and two student-athletes from each of our schools for being here. It's a great opportunity to showcase the season ahead and give the media insights for what to look forward to.

What I'd like to do today is talk about the upcoming men's basketball season, got some reflections to share with you about what's going on nationally with the game.

I also know there's a recent article about football, which I intend to address. But since this is basketball, I will make all my comments first related to basketball, take all the questions you have, and then I will speak to football issues and any questions anyone's got about those.

Let me start talking about the conference and the year ahead. Really excited about what our teams look like, feel like we've got a very, very strong conference. We're well represented with the teams in the preseason's top 25 polls. When you think about talent in our league, it's really exciting to think about the players coming into the league, some of the returning players who had options to come into the NBA and, of course, look at some of the talent that's going on to the NBA from this league, it's something very impressive indeed.

Eight of our teams have been ranked amongst the top 40 recruiting classes for the upcoming season. Ten of our entering freshmen have been rated as top 50 recruits, and 20 of them are amongst the top 100. They join a strong group of returning marquee players in our league.

While last year's postseason results were certainly disappointing by historic standards for our league, the overall trajectory and depth of the conference has been strong.

Last year seven of our teams hit the 20-win mark, which ties a record for the most in league history. And just the year before, we had three 30-win teams. We



were the only conference in the country to accomplish that. In addition, we had the second best win percentage and the third most wins of any conference in the NCAA Tournament. And, of course, Oregon reached the Final Four in that year.

We've produced a consensus All-American each of the last five seasons. The ACC is the only other conference to have done that. And we have produced 49 NBA draft picks and 26 first round selections in the last six year, second amongst all the conferences, including the No. 1 pick in the NBA Draft each of the last two years. And our teams are talented and highly ranked as we come into the coming year. So this coming season, the excitement, the talent on display is going to be at a very high level in our conference.

Another reason that I've got great anticipation for the upcoming season is the strength of our coaching. Every one of our head coaches returning, they played collegiate basketball at a high level. And we're the only autonomy five conference who can say each of our coaches has played the game at a high level. It's important for not only their basketball coaching acumen, but it helps because they understand the role of a student-athlete, the pressures and demands that student-athletes face, academically, socially, otherwise. And in terms of the elite nature of our coaches, three of our coaches were academic All-Americans as collegians, which also puts us at the top of the conference.

Our season is going to again begin and end in very exciting fashion. Our season will begin in Shanghai, China, once again for the Pac-12-China game. This year University of California Berkeley will be playing against Yale to kick off our season. This event is presented by our partners the Alibaba Group. And as you remember, before we announced last year's China game, it's part of a long-term agreement we have with Alibaba through 2020. They not only host the game every year, and we rotate the teams going through, but they distribute the Pac-12 games throughout China. 175 Pac-12 live sporting events will appear in China across linear and digital platforms.

Then our season will end in Las Vegas, for the seventh year in a row at the T-Mobile arena, March 13 through 16. We've had a really terrific experience in Las Vegas

with the partners there. Two of the four most attended basketball tournaments ever have happened in the last two years, which last year drawing over 80,000 fans for the Pac-12 men's basketball tournament and featuring a thrilling final between Arizona and USC. It's a great environment for basketball, and this has grown into one of the most successful events, not only that we host, but one of the most successful basketball tournaments in the country. Very much looking forward to it.

And it will be preceded for the first time by the Pac-12 women's basketball tournament, which will also be in Las Vegas the weekend before. So we're expanding our presence there and look forward to two consecutive weeks in Las Vegas to show the best of the best in Pac-12 women's and men's basketball.

The exposure that our programs will receive will be significant. There will be 220 Pac-12 men's basketball games on linear television this year, broadcast across the Pac-12 networks, ESPN, and Fox. ESPN is going to be televising 48 games. There will be 22 on Fox, 2 on CBS, and 149 men's basketball games on the Pac-12 networks, providing phenomenal exposure for our basketball programs. This is a great example of the mission-based purpose of the Pac-12 networks, to give us a platform for our most elite sports to be able to broadcast so many Pac-12 men's basketball tournaments. It's a great feat in itself that you can uniquely do with our one national network and six regional networks. But the number of hours with studio programming, features on our student-athletes, access to our coaches and campuses would only be possible without our own network.

In terms of our relationship with ESPN, excited to announce that here at the Pac-12 media days, not only do we have a three-hour live show on the Pac-12 networks that's going to be interviewing all our coaches and giving a sense of what's happening here today, but for the first time, ESPN's here, and there will be a one-hour live show on ESPNU from 3:00 to 4:00 Pacific time, 6:00 to 7:00 East Coast time today, that Sean Farnham is going to be hosting with our own Mike Yam.

So I believe the conference has tremendous talent. We've got great coaching, great platform for exposure, tremendous commitment by our campuses, the facilities, and I think we're going to have a very successful '18 and '19 season.

Turning to basketball more broadly and nationally, last year's media day, we announced that we're going to be forming a task force to be looking into possible reforms arising from what were then allegations and indictments that came out of the FBI. Our goal was to support college basketball, our institutions in the conference, but our peer institutions nationally in taking

a candid look at the state of basketball, recruiting, some of the concerns that have been exposed, and to be at the forefront of driving meaningful reforms.

I'm pleased to be here 12 months later to look at the work that our task force did with some very esteemed names, including existing athletic directors, prominent, respected people nationally, to come up with a set of recommendations. I hope many of you had a chance to see through a white paper that we put out that called for significant reforms. This was a helpful part of a national process led by former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice on behalf of the NCAA to examine reforms and ultimately led to a bold set of reforms that were proposed and ultimately adopted by the NCAA board of directors.

We've urged and continue to urge the NBA and the NBA Players Association to put an end to its one-and-done rule and allow young men that have a desire to play professional basketball right away coming out of high school to do that and not be forced to go to college, and still hopeful that they will make that change. The main buckets of changes that the NCAA has made align with the four buckets of main recommendations that our task force made.

First, minimizing harmful outside influences. Secondly, providing flexibility for going pro and getting a degree. You don't have to come back and get a degree. Or come back if a student-athlete doesn't get drafted. Third, providing for more independent investigations and decision makers, in terms of the NCAA adjudication and investigation process. And, fourth, creating a more efficient and binding enforcement system, including stricter penalties for those that break the rules.

Importantly, the trial that's now going on, information that comes out of third-party investigations and trials can now be used by the NCAA as part of their investigation. So there's been very meaningful progress in terms of NCAA reform, and I'm looking forward to some of those things being implemented this year, and I'm confident that college basketball is moving in the right direction in that regard. But like you, I'm looking forward to the play on the courts soon to start, and I think Pac-12 is going to be as exciting a league to watch as any in the country this year.

So with that, I'd like to open it up to any questions about basketball.

**Q. I wanted to ask a question about football if we could.**

LARRY SCOTT: I'm happy to answer any question about football, as I said at the outset, but I would like to conclude the questions about basketball first, and we'll

get right to that.

**Q. Then I'll do basketball. You had a third team drawn into a corruption scandal with Oregon now. I feel like (No microphone) and how concerning is it that now there's a third school involved? Do you foresee it stretching out and worry that more schools could be involved?**

LARRY SCOTT: Sorry about that. I got the question. Very concerned about the trial, the testimony, some of the allegations, and we treat it with a real seriousness, and we're monitoring it very carefully, as are our schools, and we're in touch with our schools about it.

Like any process like this, there are allegations, and there's a process to prove or disprove them. So I think we'll certainly hold any judgment until the process goes through, and we see what comes of it.

Each of our schools have made statements about their position. We've got leadership at our universities. They take the integrity of the competition, the behavior of their leadership and the coaches very seriously, and I think at this stage we're monitoring very carefully and waiting for the process to play out, and we'll see what the truth is that emerges.

**Q. By my count, 6 of the 12 schools have been at least mentioned in the federal investigation. It's obviously half of the conference. It's more than any other conference has to this point. Is there a problem with rule compliance in this conference from a basketball standpoint?**

LARRY SCOTT: I don't believe so. I've got no reason to believe that there's a systemic problem. Allegations have been made about a lot of schools nationally. We are eager to see what comes out of the trial, what comes out of NCAA investigation, as are our schools. I should underscore, last year we were sitting here, and the FBI had made certain allegations. There were indictments. At that time, the NCAA called for all schools to conduct self-evaluations and investigations about their programs. We 100 percent got behind that. I reinforced that with our presidents and chancellors, with our athletics directors, encouraged them to use the opportunity to conduct their own investigations into their programs to ensure compliance.

Each of our schools did that, and each of our schools came back through that process and concluded that they had no evidence of any breaking of rules and assured that, if they did, they would take action. Our schools have spoken individually about that, and I've got great confidence in the leadership of our universities, the leadership of our athletics departments. I know they take these things very seriously, and I've spent a lot of time over the last year

looking at their own programs and satisfying themselves that their programs haven't broken rules.

I'm also confident that if new information comes to the fore and if something comes out of the ongoing trial or NCAA investigations that provide additional facts, our schools will take that very seriously.

**Q. So you mentioned that information that you can take from the investigation and use that to make recommendations. You haven't exactly spelled out what that all means in that respect. Take what's happening in New York right now with the testimony and use that to directly address some of the things that are happening in schools and possibly punish schools (no microphone).**

LARRY SCOTT: It's my understanding that they can use information that might be part of a trial and use that as part of their overall investigation. I don't know that I could speak more detailed about how exactly that process will work, but that was a significant step for the NCAA.

For those that have followed this for a while, they in the past have taken the position, unless we conducted the investigation ourselves and found something ourselves, that we can't use that. So I thought it was appropriate, important, and a very positive step.

I think this will be a very early indication of how this process works, so I think we'll find out soon how that's going to work.

**Q. With this being such a mass investigation, what does the Pac-12 continue to do to investigate some of the claims that are made in this trial as far as they relate to the Pac-12?**

LARRY SCOTT: So the Pac-12 is not in the investigative and enforcement business around alleged rules violations. The NCAA plays that role on behalf of the membership. We assist the schools and the NCAA as part of that process, but we do not run parallel investigations to the NCAA.

Nothing else basketball? Okay. Let me turn my attention to football and recent reports regarding a replay call around our Washington State-USC game that appeared in Yahoo Sports, I guess less than 24 hours ago. I wanted to address it directly.

And the first thing I want to say is our conference and our leadership has a deep commitment to the integrity of officiating and to protecting student-athlete health and well-being. I think that's been demonstrated through significant investments that have been made in a variety of areas and real leadership that our conference has played on student-athlete health and

welfare as well as investments in officiating, replay review, and command.

Our command center was created three years ago, and this is the second year that it is operational for the express reason to do everything possible that technology and investment will allow to get calls right. We realize there's so much at stake during our games that -- there are often multiple games going on throughout the conference, and if through technology, we could have our best replay officials and support staff in a command center in collaboration, working with our expert officials on the field and in replay booths at our schools, that would be best in class in terms of ensuring consistent and the most correct replay calls possible.

What's been reported was of significant concern to me. It was new information I had not previously been aware of. And something since the report came out that I've had a chance to look into and to have discussions with the individuals involved directly and others.

And what I want to share with you is the initial conclusions that I've come to, having had a chance to review the report and look into it. First off, I want to be clear: I've come to the conclusion that we've made mistakes in terms of our procedures involved with replay review in the command center. We mixed administrative oversight and leadership with realtime replay review calls made by our experts on the field, in the stadium, and in the command center. Moreover, we've allowed for ambiguity about who's got the final call and who makes the ultimate decisions in replay review, and what's very important in any replay or any rulemaking decisions is that there be clarity about who makes those decisions, and it's a mistake that we've allowed ambiguity in who makes those decisions.

So effective immediately, we're going to do two things. We're going to launch a more thorough review of how replay works in our conference, and I'll have a chance to work with folks internally, with our members, to review policies and procedures regarding football replay review and the role of the command center. And, secondly, we're immediately changing procedures so that conference leadership responsible for football and responsible for officiating, while they'll continue to play their important oversight role in those functions, they will have no involvement in the realtime decision making behind replay review. Those decisions will be solely in the purview of our replay officials at the stadium, in the command center, and on the field.

So I wanted to share that will be implemented immediately with the games upcoming this weekend, as we also launched the longer term review and evaluation of our replay procedures.

With that, I'm happy to take any questions anyone has about that. I'd appreciate you letting me share that news.

**Q. (No microphone) the integrity of this situation.**

LARRY SCOTT: Integrity of officiating in the conference is a top, top priority, along with student-athlete health. So if there's any question, any ambiguity about that, it's something I take very, very seriously. And with what I'm announcing today, I want to make absolutely clear that we're not leaving any room for that going forward. We want to make a clearer -- I want to take away any possible question or shadow of a doubt that anyone has that the decisions that are being made on replay review are made by trained officials that have no other role at the conference aside from that.

**Q. The inference in the Yahoo article was that your senior vice president of business affairs the one that overruled the call by the booth official, according to the replay report, and a guy by the name of Woodie Dixon. Is he still involved in the replay, and have you taken a look back to see his possible involvement in other situations as well?**

LARRY SCOTT: Yeah. So Woodie Dixon has several responsibilities at the conference. He's our general counsel. He's responsible for student-athlete health initiatives, and he oversees all football. He's got long experience working at the NFL, working at the Kansas City Chiefs, and he helped design our command center replay review, and he's a nationally prominent person in discussion about rules and policies around football.

He has been involved in support for our replay officials and has been involved in discussions about replay decisions heretofore. Upon reflection, the reason replay was created was to have our elite replay officials be able to work collaboratively here in the command center with our officials in the stadium. And upon reflection I think that was a mistake to allow -- because he's got other responsibilities and he's not an official, I recognize that there's a perception, there could be a perception of a conflict of interest. And because officiating the decisions that are on the field are of such importance and the public trust in that is of such importance, we're going to make sure he's not involved in those discussions going forward.

**Q. The report said that -- I mean, it inferred that he was the one that actually made that decision. Is that true? Had that happened previously?**

LARRY SCOTT: So I had a chance to look into and investigate. It was not his intention -- he did not believe he was making a decision. He believed he was trying to offer a point of view, angles on the call, trying to

bring to bear consistency with other calls that he wanted our replay officials to consider in making the decisions.

Having said that, it was clearly from the replay official in the stadium's perspective -- and other people's perspective -- they clearly interpreted it as a decision or a directive, and from my perspective, that's enough. Even if it wasn't intended -- and I'm confident it wasn't intended -- as he's making the decision, he was there to provide support, context, consistency. But none of that matters. If he was involved in making the decision, that was inappropriate. So the only way that I know how to eliminate that possible perception going forward is to have him not be involved in the conversations, nor our head of officiating, David Coleman.

Those are the two people. Woodie Dixon is responsible for football in totality for our conference. David Coleman reports to Woodie Dixon. He's our head of officiating. Those are the two people that I hold accountable for the operations of our football, the operations of our officiating. But that important oversight responsibility, I've determined, should be separated from the day-to-day realtime review of calls and decisions.

**Q. Have you had a chance to have any discussions with any of the replay officials? Something like that, I imagine, would cause some morale problems, some questions, and maybe even some animosity. Have you had a chance to talk to any of the replay officials about this?**

LARRY SCOTT: I have. I haven't had a lot of time since the report came out, but I have had a chance to have direct discussions with leadership of our replay official operation and felt it was important to quickly address this issue and not let it linger.

**Q. Do you feel as though they're satisfied with this?**

LARRY SCOTT: I believe they will be satisfied by it, yes. I haven't had a chance to preview exactly what we're doing, but the feedback I got was important feedback in coming to these decisions.

**Q. How often has Woodie been involved in decisions like that in the past?**

LARRY SCOTT: His responsibilities include him being on-site at our games, visiting with our coaches, watching game management, visiting with key personnel at our campuses around games, and sometimes he splits his time between that and being in the command center. He is not always in the command center. Sometimes he's traveling.

I can't quantify exactly how frequent the communication

is, but there is enough of it where I realize the significant perception problem, and that's a mistake from my perspective. So whether it was a little or a lot -- and I don't have a great answer for you about how to define the frequency of it, but I will tell you what he told me and what the replay leadership told me is that it has not been significant.

**Q. Other than changing the structure there, do you honestly have any objective (no microphone) see how that calls into question the integrity of the entire conference and there's a trust issue at that point. How can you assure fans, coaches, and anyone that's paying attention that there's really (no microphone) with what's going on.**

LARRY SCOTT: What I'm announcing today, I think, is the most significant, strong response that I can imagine at this stage. And going forward, there's a lot I think we can do to compare ourselves to others, to talk to officials, more than I've had a chance to do in the last 12 to -- I've lost track of when it was that the article came out, but it hadn't been long. And I want to make these immediate steps now, and I want to take more time to talk to our members, talk to our football coaches, talk to other leaders nationally about what's best in place, what's best practice.

So I can't tell you whether there will be longer term changes or not, but I feel like this is the most significant step I can make now to acknowledge that we made a mistake in allowing the situation to develop, to allowing any shred of concern about integrity or ambiguity, and I feel like it's my responsibility to make the most significant change I can make right now to lift any cloud that might exist even for the next games that we play starting Friday night.

**Q. Are you concerned that this has been -- just one example, but are you concerned that there has been several in the past that might have been influenced? And people are going to look back at controversial calls and kind of wonder who was behind that call?**

LARRY SCOTT: I am not. As I mentioned to an earlier question, I've had a chance since the report came out to have direct conversations with our replay officials and leadership, and I've asked those questions point blank, and I'm not aware of any other incident where our replay officials have had a concern.

**Q. Last one from me. Is there going to be any sort of punishment for people involved or just a change in policy?**

LARRY SCOTT: It's a change in policy. We'll have a chance to review with more time and think about other issues, but I'm confident there is no mal-intent or anything like that, and I take responsibility for our policy

being what it is ultimately and this ambiguity being there.

**Q. (No microphone) Would that be beneficial perhaps to some of the people who might have questions to say here are the times and instances when this individual was in the command center?**

LARRY SCOTT: I think it could be, yeah. I think with more time, as we launch an immediate review, I'll get a better handle on that. In the 12 hours since the report came out, knowing that the media are here today and wanting to have a bias for immediate and very clear acknowledgement that this was a mistake and action in terms of clearing it up, I haven't had a chance to document that.

**Q. Would you guys be interested in sharing the officiating reports in the future as a way of transparency as a way of establishing trust?**

LARRY SCOTT: That hasn't been our policy, and I don't think it's any other conference's policy for, I think, good reasons that have been well thought through, but that's something I'll think about going forward.

**Q. What are the reasons for not sharing them?**

LARRY SCOTT: I think our league, as well as other leagues, have not thought it's a healthy or helpful thing to grade publicly every call. We think transparency is of critical importance in terms of the communication with football coaches and schools, and there's a process with every weekend, after every game, our coaches have the opportunity to submit questions to our head of officiating about calls. If they think a mistake was made, if they want a clarification about a rule, we've got a very open process, very transparent process with the schools, where they submit a question, and they always get an answer to the question about whether a call was right, whether a call was wrong. If they want an explanation, they get it, by Monday.

To allow for that transparency, that's a private conference, and our coaches and our administrators are not allowed to talk about it publicly, and we don't talk about it publicly. And I think that's been reviewed from time to time. I'm sure that's been reviewed from time to time with other leagues. I think our policy is consistent with other leagues.

Thank you.