

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 25 2018

## Larry Scott Pac-12 Commissioner

COMMISSIONER LARRY SCOTT: Good morning and hello, everyone. It is a great pleasure to welcome you here, to the Pac-12 Conference's 2018 Football Media Day.

I want to first thank all of our student-athletes and head coaches who are here today to speak with you. Our student-athletes are what this day is all about and I've got no doubt that you will find them to be, not only world-class in terms of athletic talent, but also incredibly intelligent and interesting young men.

I also want to thank the media who are here today to cover Pac-12 football throughout the year and capturing the heart and soul of our student-athletes and what our conference is all about. It's thanks to you that so many fans are able to follow Pac-12 football across multiple platforms. And a final thanks to our partners - the Tournament of Roses and all of our bowl games which provide such amazing experiences for all of our student-athletes and our fans.

I'm very excited about the state of Pac-12 football and its trajectory for the future.

This season we're welcoming top-flight coaching talent, as well as returning athletes who have earned several national honors, along with a strong group of underclassmen. Five new coaches who bring a wealth of success and experience are joining a well-established group of leading coaches. Our schools have made and are continuing to make significant investments, not just in coaching, but also in our football facilities, to ensure we can attract and compete at the highest level.

Our conference has produced a Heisman Trophy winner and two finalists over just the last four years, and several Pac-12 players figure prominently in this year's pre-season favorite list. We've got two returning Offensive Players of the Year in Jake Browning and Bryce Love, eight returning starting quarterbacks in total, five returning thousand-yard rushers, and nearly 100 starters who are either freshmen or sophomores last year, including eight who earned Freshman All-America accolades last season.

This is in addition to another strong recruiting class for



our conference. If there's any indicator of the caliber of players produced by Pac-12 football, one need only look at the fact that the Pac-12 has produced the second most number one draft picks amongst all conferences, and consistently produced a high number of first round draft picks.

So we're building on a strong base. Much was written and discussed about our bowl record last year. From our perspective, a handful of season-ending games are not a key indicator of a conference's overall strength and competitiveness. Nine of our 12 teams qualified for bowls, and we've placed two teams in the six New Year's bowls. At the end of the season, we have four teams among the top 25.

It's clear by all those measures we've got a strong, deep, and highly competitive conference that provides our fans with great match-ups every week. Speaking of great match-ups, we'll once again be presenting the Pac-12 Football Championship Game at Levi Stadium in Santa Clara, home of the San Francisco 49ers, in partnership with the 49ers and Levi's. Last year we once again showcased a great game on a national stage.

Then, as I think you know, the College Football Playoff championship game will also be held on the West Coast of Levi Stadium in January, and this will be a great opportunity to draw more attention to Pac-12 football. I know that our conference's teams will be doing everything they can to be in that game.

Of course, the 105th Rose Bowl Game will feature a leading Pac-12 team against a top team from the Big Ten. There will also be some amazing and incredibly exciting and tough non-conference games played on a national stage early in the season, including Washington and Auburn in week one, USC and Texas, UCLA at Oklahoma, and both Stanford and USC playing against Notre Dame in addition to Colorado, Nebraska, and many others.

In addition to presenting exciting and winning football, we're constantly looking at ways to make the experience better for everyone. Last year in response to changing consumer habits, we led the nation in establishing a pilot program to experiment with ways to reduce the length of games. We announced the

results just before last year's Pac-12 Football Championship.

We were able to cut the average game length by about five minutes, and the average broadcast window by eight minutes. It may not sound like a lot, but it resulted in fewer games being joined in progress. I know many in college sports have been closely following our pilot program as they evaluate what to do themselves to tackle the issue of game length.

Today, I'm able to announce to you that we'll be expanding this pilot program in 2018-19 to include not only non-conference games, but also some conference games. Additionally, the pilot will include not only Pac-12 Networks games, but some ESPN and FOX games as well. In all, we anticipate having 30 games included in this year's pilot, which will once again feature shortened halftimes and some innovative commercial formats.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that for the upcoming season, ESPN-FOX will once again be showcasing 44 Pac-12 football games to a national audience, bringing top talent and highest quality production to promote our teams.

Additionally, our Pac-12 Networks will for the first time be bringing our studio show on-site each and every week of the football season to all 12 campuses, along with our football championship game, men's and women's basketball tournaments.

During the football season, our networks will also, for the first time, be on-site from Wednesday of each week to capture and showcase all of the excitement on and around our campuses in the lead-up to game day, including both football and other Pac-12 sports going on our campuses.

As has been my custom each year, I also want to take this opportunity to give you a broader view beyond just football of where the conference is headed. And I'd like to share with you some thoughts on the direction of college sports and sports media.

This is a time of constant, even accelerating, change in college sports, but one thing has stayed the same: The Pac-12 remains the Conference of Champions, as the winningest conference in the country.

Last year, the Pac-12 brought home 12 NCAA Championships, more than twice the next highest conference, and that's in addition to ten runner-up finishes on top of that.

The total number of Pac-12 Championships now stands at 513. We've led the nation in NCAA titles for

13 straight years, 17 of the last 18 years, and 52 of the last 58 years.

Four of the past six years, we've been in double digits in terms of NCAA titles, and nine of these titles were in women's sports. As many of you saw, we capped the year with a thrilling NCAA baseball title. The Pac-12 boasts the only three universities in the country -- Stanford, UCLA, and USC -- that have won over 100 NCAA titles.

Additionally, and remarkably, Stanford won its 24th consecutive Directors' Cup as the best overall athletics department, with UCLA finishing second and USC finishing fourth.

That's a lot of numbers. And it's not just the numbers that matter, it's the breadth of the accomplishment, including the exceptional strength of our women's sports programs that is such a differentiator for our conferences.

There are different ways to measure success in college sports. The scorecard we think matters, and that I know our university presidents and athletics directors care about most is academic and athletic excellence across all sports.

By this measure, we're achieving unmatched success.

Turning to our conference more broadly, under the active guidance of our 12 university presidents and chancellors, the Pac-12 Conference continues to take a leadership role in some of the most challenging issues facing college athletics.

I'd like to touch on one of these, arguably the most important one today, the issue of student-athlete health and well-being, particularly in the area of mental health and head trauma is paramount to our athletics departments and our conference as a whole. All of us here know all too well the seriousness of both of these issues.

College sports faces challenging questions in this area, and I appreciate all the attention the media has focused on this critical issue.

As part of our work with the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Health and Well-Being Initiative, as well as in conjunction with the work of the NCAA, we are seeing research, as well as the real-life situations on our campuses, as they work so hard on this every day.

It tells us that we have to make this a priority. And that's what we're doing with experts on our campuses. We formed a task force of leading doctors on our campuses in the area of mental health to advance best

practices, conduct and apply important research, and serve as a collective resource to college athletics administrators who are caring for our student-athletes every day.

One early initiative we're working on in this area is the Dam Worth It campaign, initiated by Oregon State student-athletes to bring awareness to mental health issues across all college campuses.

We're also leading into difficult questions around brain injury by funding research as part of a brain trauma task force, the first of its kind of doctors and researchers across all of our campuses, who are employing new technologies, working with our athletics programs, and taking a leading role in the NCAA's CARE Consortium, the largest concussion study in history.

I'm proud to say this focus and commitment by our universities on student-athlete health and well-being is a critical area we've been leading for a number of years. With the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Health and Well-Being Initiative that we began in 2013, we've committed \$3.6 million per year to fund these research projects. This year's grants were awarded to six different projects, addressing subjects including head trauma, mental health, hip injury prevention, are using technology to develop more accurate statistics on injuries and more.

All these efforts include a remarkable number of experts in medicine and science from our campuses. And the important work they're doing is far too complex for me to address here in detail, but I urge you, for those that are interested, to review it at [pac-12.com](http://pac-12.com), as well as to speak with our athletics departments that are here.

I think you'll be impressed and also find the inspiration for some worthwhile reporting about work that's happening in this area.

I've touched upon Pac-12 football, our Conference of Champions success, and our Pac-12 Conference leadership platform in one critical area that we're incredibly proud of. And I'd like to finish with some reflections on some of the broader macro trends impacting not only collegiate sports but sports generally.

The first is the changing face of the media landscape, which is evolving at an incredible pace. The change reflects the transformation and how viewers are consuming all forms of content. You're all aware of the mergers of proposed mergers among some of the major media companies in our country. Efforts to attain the scale to compete with the technology and content

companies, from Apple, to Google, to Amazon, Netflix, Facebook and others, they are slowly but surely increasing their investment in live sports.

Nobody knows who will come out on top or exactly what our consumers will gravitate to in the future in terms of how they consume sports, but it's clear that the rights to carry premium live sports are increasing in value and that we will need to deliver content in new ways, through entities that may not even exist today.

Let me pause, to emphasize, this is exactly the reason we love the position we're in as a conference: Owning and controlling our content, through our own media company, the Pac-12 Networks, and having control of our rights.

Uniquely, amongst conference networks, we've got full control of our rights and content, which preserves the flexibility we need to adapt to this rapidly changing media landscape and provides the freedom to experiment with new technologies, and ultimately will allow us to maximize our values long term. Because we, along with most analysts and experts, believe the value of premium sports rights will continue to increase.

It then follows with owning and controlling those rights is the best position to be in. It gives us flexibility and the broadest range of options as these markets evolve.

Rather than having our rights locked down long term in a situation we can't control, we'll be able to capitalize, both in the short term and the long term, on opportunities in this changing landscape.

Pressure on the traditional television models continues to grow with over-the-top streaming to consumers, mini bundles, radically different consumption patterns, the importance of mobility, and new entrants that come from entirely outside the traditional broadcasting cable world.

In the coming years, I believe the collegiate model will continue to evolve as well in response to these media trends I was just describing, and also in response to some of the legal challenges we're facing and in response to an evolving culture in our country.

I believe it will ultimately not only survive, but be strengthened by the reform movement which Pac-12 has played a leading role in. We've already made important strides, things like multi-year scholarships, covering the full cost of attendance, and there's more to do.

We have to ensure that our student-athletes, without sacrificing the excellence of their athletic performance

and dreams, have the time and opportunity to also excel in their studies and fully take advantage of life on their campuses.

As our task force recommended in the context of men's basketball, we must modernize our approach to the rules so that student-athletes anticipating a professional career can get the experienced, professional guidance they need without sacrificing their college eligibility, while also encouraging into the one-and-done phenomena. These and other reforms following the ten-point approach articulated in 2014 by Pac-12 presidents and chancellors, as well as the recommendations of the Rice Commission, will strengthen and modernize the collegiate model, keeping what's best about it and sustaining a broad variety of men's and women's sports.

Reforms to the model will emphasize the primacy of our academic invention, while modernizing the rules to meet today's student-athlete.

I know you all came here to talk about football, so let's get to it. As we do, I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of everyone in the conference, both among the conference staff and at our member schools.

I want to thank our presidents and chancellors for their vision and their support, along with the athletics directors, their staffs and the coaches for their devotion to excellence, and the leadership they provide to our student-athletes in positioning the Pac-12 Conference where it is today, with such a bright future.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation for the hard work and dedication of our Pac-12 student-athletes, men and women in 24 different sports, that are the best in the country, part of the winningest conference in the country. They're champions on and off the field.

Thank you. We will now turn to our coaches and our student-athletes, and I'll return at 11:30 for a special presentation and for a Q&A session. Have a good day.