

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

Friday, July 29, 2022
Hollywood, California, USA

Oregon Ducks Coach Dan Lanning Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Coach Lanning here. He'll give his opening comments, then open it up for Q&A.

DAN LANNING: First off, I just want to tell everyone how honored and excited to be sitting on this stage right now as the head football coach at Oregon. Extremely fortunate to have great leadership at our university with our athletic director, Rob Mullens, President Schill. I'm excited about the direction of our program, excited about being part of the fastest-growing brand in college football.

Since 2010 there's been nine teams that have played for a national championship. Fortunate enough that Oregon has done that twice. Multiple conference championships have been won at this place. Obviously we had 2.57 million viewers tune in every single week to watch our games, which is top 10 in the nation, best in our conference.

We've continued to recruit at a really high level. Excited to continue to bring great recruits to our place. We have an innovative approach in the way we do that.

One thing that I will say about all that success is that's past success. This is the 2022 team. We have to be focused on what we're going to do in the year 2022 as a team and a staff. In fact, each one of those experiences is totally unique and different to us.

Moving forward, one thing that's certainly changed in this off-season for us is our team has a void. We're missing a brother in Spencer Webb who we lost in a tragic accident. We spent a lot of time together as a family, mourned his loss. Something that you certainly cannot replace.

But time, with the heart, it only grows fonder. We want to live. I talked to our players about that moment. Spencer, on your tombstone, there's a day when you were born, a day when you pass. But what made Spencer special is how he lived that dash in between those two numbers. We want to live and create a dash that's meaningful.

I think our get-real sessions have been really beneficial to our team. We finished off our summer workouts with a climb up Spencer Butte, which will be an annual tradition to honor him.

Our theme this season as we honor Spencer is really growth. Had the conversation with our team about the bamboo plant, how over time you'll water that plant every single day, and at times you don't see the growth. It hasn't come out of the ground. But at some point that plant breaks ground and it grows exponentially.

I'm excited to see that investment in our team. I'm excited to see us continue to build, continue to grow in that effort as we focus on the process and the investment in our players.

The expectations of our team, really outside of our room it doesn't matter. We're focused on the opinions of the people in our program, collecting 24-hour wins with that growth mindset.

I also want to extend an extreme gratitude to the players in our program. It's been a pleasure to work with those guys day in, day out. They're true professionals. They love each other. We're talking about it a lot, power of unit, connection. That's been a big piece for us.

Fortunately I have the best staff in the nation. I feel really confident in that, was able to go collect some great players. I'm proud of the two players I was actually able to bring on this trip.

Alex Forsyth is a seasoned veteran. Both of these guys come here today at college graduates, working on their second degrees, which is exciting for me. We talk about our investment in education, but those guys are great representation of our program.

Alex has been here before. I was able to lean on him to see what this day would look like. Proud of DJ Johnson, the progress he's had this spring, the job he's done. Thrilled to have those guys represent our program here today.



All that being said, I certainly couldn't pass the opportunity to recognize our first game. Get to play a really familiar opponent in Georgia in a neutral-site game in Atlanta. Certainly excited about going back and seeing some familiar faces going there, getting to compete against a mentor and a friend in Kirby Smart.

With that being said, I'll go ahead and open it up for questions.

Q. You spoke to growth there. What kind of growth have you seen at the quarterback position this off-season? How far into fall will it be a competition? Do you have a deadline?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I'm really excited. Just at the end of the day you want to know you have quarterbacks in your program you think you can win with. I think we have multiple guys that can do that, with Bo, Ty and Jay, have all been extreme competitors.

Probably more than anything I've been excited with their passion to improve. To be elite, to be a special player, you have to go above and beyond. All of those guys have really contributed in the success of what work they did this summer when people weren't watching, what it looked like when there weren't people standing on the field assessing their efforts. Those guys have put in a lot of extra work.

Q. With the season opening, going against your former team, are all the players fired up? Not often teams get to open up against the reigning national champs. What is the vibe?

DAN LANNING: Honestly, we haven't spent a ton of focus on game one. I know our players are certainly excited to be on a national stage early and get to play obviously an elite opponent in Georgia that we're really familiar with. Guess what, they're also familiar with me.

That being said, we're really focused on right now. You can't play game one until you have practice one, right? That's our next approach.

Q. With the Pac-12 against the SEC, do you think this game is so important for the Pac-12 overall at the national perspective to really put on a show, show what the Pac-12 is all about? Will this spring forward your team to run the table?

DAN LANNING: Our goal is to win every single game at the University of Oregon. Certainly it's an important game, just like every game's important.

After that game, the next game will be the next most

important game. So we're going to focus on that. Oregon, like I said, is a national brand. It's fun to be in a place where you get to play premier opponents like Georgia.

Q. Given the changes that are happening within the conference, within the sport itself, NIL, transfers, super conferences, how do you feel about the direction that the sport is headed?

DAN LANNING: Say that last part again?

Q. How do you feel about the direction the sport is headed?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, it seems to be ever-changing, doesn't it? I've been asked a couple times what it's like being a first-year head coach in this environment. The one thing I'll say is it's probably pretty similar to being a 15-year head coach in this environment because it's different. It continues to change.

I think what we do at the University of Oregon is we continue to put the focus of the players first. I certainly want to see our players maximize their opportunities, whether that be through name, image and likeness. I think we're positioned really well to be successful there. But we want to play elite competition. I trust George and our leadership in conference to continue to point us in the right direction there.

But it's a fun ever-changing day. You always have to pay attention. There's usually a headline when you wake up in the morning. Fun to adapt and be on your toes. Certainly different to coach in.

Q. How many conversations or how have you addressed the conference realignment stuff with USC and UCLA leaving? How often does that come up on the recruiting trail? Is that difficult to navigate?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think it's certainly a conversation. Like I said, I trust our leadership to be positioned for success. Oregon has been always a premier team in college football. I think we'll continue to be.

Our fans are extremely passionate. Being a top-10 team when it comes to views in homes this last year, the ability to compete for championships year in and year out with coaching changes and different things. That's still allowed Oregon to be at the forefront of competition.

That will continue to be the case with our support outside of just the university, but also within the university.

Q. Oregon for years, they chased USC. Obviously

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Georgia chased Alabama. Now that Oregon has taken that next step, do you feel they're still chasing the ghost of USC's past success, or do you feel like, like Georgia, they've already crossed that barrier and just chasing their own shadow?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, we're not chasing anybody. We're trying to maximize ourselves. We're going to be the best team we can possibly be in the year 2022.

Our goal, like I said, is to win every single game. That's our goal. We have the team and the ability to do it. Time will tell if we're able to fill that void and do those things that are necessary to be successful.

Q. With all the success that Oregon has had, taking top California talent, get a guy like Justin Flowe, one of the best linebackers to come out of Cali, a plethora of guys, how do you feel that -- are they ready to take that next step? Do you feel like you have so much depth that it kind of could be anyone?

DAN LANNING: Kind of what?

Q. As far as like the talent, the guys you have coming in from Cali, top-flight talent, do you feel like it's anyone's game, or do you feel like certain people are differentiating themselves?

DAN LANNING: I mean, ultimately we want to recruit the best talent in the nation, right? Obviously California is an important piece for us.

It's amazing to me how many kids I'll talk to, the first time I talk to them they tell me how Oregon has always been their dream school. This place, like I said, is a national brand.

We're going to continue to go recruit nationally, but we want to win on the West Coast and copy the best players on the West Coast as well. Certainly we'll continue to recruit California.

I'm excited about the guys we have in our program already, on our roster already, for their continued success, and have high expectations for them.

Q. What is the biggest thing you took away from finally beating Alabama? What's something you've been hammering home to your players?

DAN LANNING: Obviously I've had great experience in the last several years of my coaching career. I spend very little time talking about the past. I'm really focused on the future.

The one thing I'll say about that game, the national championship game, is our ability to adapt and change. You have to go back, when you lose to an opponent, it gives you an opportunity to really reassess yourself.

When I talk about our theme for this season being growth, I think that's a big part of it. Being in a growth mindset means you have to learn from successes and failures, right? We talked about it at the program I was at before. We'd go to the doctor after a win on Monday morning. We're going to do the same thing here at Oregon.

We have to figure out what we can get better at. Hopefully you go to the doctor before you get sick. That's certainly the goal for us.

Q. You have added a number of cornerbacks from your 2022 signing class. What have you seen from them since they arrived in the summer, and how do you think they can help your cornerback group going into this year?

DAN LANNING: I think one thing you'll notice with the guys we added this year is they all have speed and length and size. In my experience, those are dominating attributes to being a successful corner. If you have speed, you can make up for a lot of mistakes.

I'm excited about those guys's work ethic. It's still early, a learning curve there. Not being able to go through all of spring with each of them makes it a little bit tougher certainly.

But it's a group that wants to be great. I have a lot of faith in their position coach, Demetric Martin, has done a great job, a lot of success, then our defensive staff to get those guys prepared and ready to roll.

Q. This is a big season for a number of reasons. You're getting your start as a head coach. I think it's big because of where Oregon is at with their championship window, the timing of your arrival. What will success look like for you in 2022?

DAN LANNING: I think time will tell. Ultimately I would tell you, again, we need to win every single game we're supposed to win, but our goal is to win every one of them.

Again, I feel like we have the talent to be competitive in the games we're going to play in. Doesn't mean we have to play our best game every single week. But we want to improve. I want to see measured growth.

Are we making the same mistakes in week 10 that we make in week 1? I'd say no. If we're able to grow as a



team, continue to develop, have that same mindset, I think that approach will be really special for us.

Q. You have a lot of versatile players on your defense. When you're getting the lay of the land of your defense, how do you think that versatility will be able to help you?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I believe in position versatility. I believe in figuring out ways to have your best 11 players on the field. Another mantra of mine is always if you're good enough, you're old enough. If we have players that are good enough, we want to find a role for them on our team, want to be able to have them contribute to our success.

When you have guys that can learn multiple positions, have guys that can move around and are smart and intelligent, at the end of the day it only benefits your team whenever an injury occurs or a certain pressure package, personnel grouping can be changed to adapt to our strengths.

Q. To the injury front, Justin Flowe, Brandon Dorlus, Popo Aumavae were all limited or out for most of spring. Updates on those threes?

DAN LANNING: I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about injuries. I will say all those guys are doing really well this summer. We definitely think they're going to be a big part of what we're doing this season.

Q. On the transfer portal, since we spoke last, additions of a couple offensive guys, Caleb Chapman and Bucky Irving. Can you speak to what those guys provide and how much you expect they can impact this year's team?

DAN LANNING: Our focus in the portal was to find guys that can make our program better, enhance our program, but marry that with the culture we're instilling right now in our program, the investment in our culture.

Those guys have been phenomenal additions. They have great experience in college football games. It's good to be able to lean on guys that have firsthand experience in games. They're working really hard this summer. I think we have 54 newcomers to our program this year. Obviously there's a returning roster of some great talent, but we also have some great additions like those guys.

Q. You were talking about speed, just coming from the SEC, there's a saying, maybe it's a myth, there's more speed in the SEC. What is your assessment about that?

DAN LANNING: I can't speak to it, not playing in this conference right now. But I know that speed wins football games. I know we used GPS units every single day in practice and workout. We have some pretty good speeds out there. I would say we have some fast guys on our team. That's something I'm excited about. I hope the people we play don't have as many fast guys as us.

Q. You got to kind of pick your own staff as the head coach of Oregon. What made Kenny Dillingham the guy?

DAN LANNING: Kenny is a guy I obviously have a ton of respect for. We've been around each other since Arizona State. We worked together at Memphis. A guy I talked ball with every off-season. We see the game very similarly. He's a teacher. He's a guy that came up from grassroots, but obviously is extremely intelligent, sees the game in a unique way.

Really thrilled to bring him aboard. There's a lot of people that obviously wanted to be a part of our program. Kenny is the guy that made sense when it came to QB development and see the game the way I saw the game, having a system.

Excited about the direction of our offense and the job he's done with our offensive staff. Obviously there's some great pieces to that puzzle on that offensive staff with him, with Junior Adams, Drew Mehringer, Carlos Locklyn, Adrian Klemm. Great experience on that side of the ball that's going to help us be dynamic.

Q. When we were at this point about a year ago heading into fall camp, the previous coaching staff was talking about getting to a dependable two deep. Obviously you're familiar with the roster now. What does that process look like for you now?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, in the spring obviously we were down some guys. We had some injuries. We didn't get to see every single player on our roster go through the spring, compete. Like I said, we have 54 newcomers. Some of those guys were able to practice with you, some weren't.

That being said, that's our job as coaches, right? We're tasked with getting our guys ready to play, making sure we ask them to incorporate systems that they can execute.

Like I said, I feel strongly we have the roster to be effective. Obviously any team can be affected by injuries. We have to be able to adapt and put a great product out there on the field. I think we're close to having a good roster for that.



Q. Justin Flowe was a Pre-Season All-Conference guy. Speaks to how much potential he seems to have. As you look at him, how do you see him fitting into year defense? What makes him special?

DAN LANNING: Justin was other guy that I actually recruited while I was at Georgia. Obviously he's a dynamic athlete. He's a really talented player, a specimen. I think at this point he's played five quarters. I think Justin will tell you there's high expectations and he hasn't been able to execute the level he wants to yet because of injury.

I have great belief in Justin as well as all of our linebackers on our roster. We have a great group there. That's something I have good experience with.

I'm excited to see him continue to develop. I'm glad that he's healthy and ready to go perform.

Q. Obviously kids come to schools for all different reasons, coaches, facilities, the prestige of the program, which Oregon has. They also come for the reputation of the conference. I'm curious if you're concerned about the message that coaches will have to I guess maybe change about the Pac-12 with UCLA and USC leaving in a couple years?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I have zero concerns from that angle, that front, just because I know how strong our brand and product is. I share a vision that our leadership in the conference and our school shares.

Like I said to start, Oregon is a brand that is national. We're going to play premier programs year in and year out. There's some great storied history obviously in this conference. I'm excited about that as that continues forward.

The conference champions, the last four years, are still in this conference. That's something that I'm excited to see and compete against, especially for the next two years.

I think the biggest way you control that narrative is you go and win games. That's certainly our job at Oregon.

Q. Could you see the SEC and the Big Ten using this type of their super conferences against the Pac-10 schools in terms of recruiting?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, ultimately I could certainly see people using that. But that doesn't mean it's going to be effective, right? Again, as I said, Oregon is a brand that can stand alone and competed for championships in the last 12 years. Only eight other teams that can say that.

We're really confident in our product. We're a brand that's built and a school that has been built on innovation. We'll continue to be cutting edge. Those are the reasons I came here in the first place.

Q. How would you describe the last seven months as a recruiter now that you are a head coach?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, it's been a whirlwind, a lot of fun. It's fun piecing together the talent. Obviously we can recruit at a really high level. It's also about bringing in coaches that are about relationships and development. I feel really strongly we brought in a great coaching staff that is built on relationships, not just effort, not just a sales pitch. That's not our approach. It's built on real relationships.

When you have that, I think you can recruit at a high level. Certainly there's a lot of pieces that go into being a head coach. You wear a lot of hats. When you have a great team around you, it gives you a chance to be successful.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach, for your time. Appreciate it.

DAN LANNING: Appreciate it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports