

# Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

Friday, July 29, 2022  
Hollywood, California, USA

## Arizona State Sun Devils Coach Herm Edwards Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We've got Coach Edwards here. He'll have an opening statement, then we'll open it up for Q&A.

Coach.

HERM EDWARDS: Well, it's my pleasure to be here. Just viewing it from where I sit, I've been fortunate enough to talk to a lot of the student-athletes that have represented these universities today. The universities are in good hands with our student-athletes, the way they represent themselves, when you hear them speak, they talk about their programs. I think that's very, very important.

We have two young men in the back there, Kyle Soelle and LaDarius Henderson, that have been in our program. Kyle, for one, has been in there five years, and LaDarius has been there four. Can't thank them enough for what they've done this week representing their football team, ASU University as well.

Next thing I'm going to comment on before I open it up for questions, I've never taken so many elevators in a day. I'm elevatored out right now. I don't know what button to push, what floor I'm going to, but I know there's a lot in this building, and they all work.

I'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Herm, when you have so many new players that you're going to have to rely upon right out of the gate, what things do you have to do to be able to accelerate that development, especially in light of some of the challenges you had last year?**

HERM EDWARDS: I think, like most programs now, with the new model, which is free agency, I call it, your roster will change. I'm accustomed to that. I dealt with that in the National Football League.

But you make a great point. For us, we have 43 new

players. Right now it seems to me from afar when I watch them gel, watched some of them in the spring, now we've added some more, a very tight-knit group of guys in my opinion, what I've seen.

But the point is, how will they play together, how will they collectively come together. I think you probably won't know that until after the third week of competition, of what kind of team.

You have these aspirations of doing certain things, but I think after three weeks, you're going to figure out how they play together. I've told the team that. Then you can determine what type of team you are. That's the fun part about coaching.

**Q. I know you're used to smaller rosters in the NFL. You're thin in certain spots, on scholarship numbers. What do you think about that challenge, needing guys to stay healthy?**

HERM EDWARDS: Well, you're right, we lost 11 guys last year off that team. Some of them drafted, others were signed as free agents. All of them graduated, which is really good.

But the receiver core was hit some. Some guys decided to go other places. It's a group of not a lot of experience. Some talented players over there now. We brought in a couple guys with some playing experience. That will be interesting how that kind of facet of it comes together.

There's some other parts, too, though, that need to come together. I think that's the uniqueness of our team right now.

**Q. You had some of these players transfer after spring football. How much of that do you think was NIL related? Your thoughts about how NIL has sort of changed a lot of the talent acquisition?**

HERM EDWARDS: I think we'll all be naïve if they didn't think some of that was part of it. I would say more than some of it. That's the landscape in which we are now in.



I think every coach understands that. That's a big part of it. And we know it. I think we all saw the noise of the train coming down the track, but the train is here now. How you adapt to it and how you go about coaching going forward, you have to adjust.

I think we're all able to do that. That's where it's at. It's not going to change.

**Q. Since we last saw you in spring ball, you added a quarterback, Emory Jones from Florida. Maybe can you describe what he has brought, what you've seen from him so far.**

HERM EDWARDS: Great, great work ethic. Has some leadership qualities that you like. He has experience. That helps you.

It will be interesting at that position how that boils out. There will be some competition, as you know. But with that being said, you got to make a decision sooner than later at that position because it's probably the most important position on any football team at any level. You got to get that one right. You got to get him in place so he can play with the players he's going to play with on offense.

There will be some competition there, and then we'll have to make a decision.

**Q. Wondering about the addition of Brian Billick as an offensive analyst, him and Marvin reunited again. Definitely a lot of experience among your two special assistants.**

HERM EDWARDS: We all go back. I don't know if you guys know, but Brian was at BYU when I left Cal and went to San Diego State. So I played against him in college. So we all kind of go back together.

But it's another set of eyes. Our offense has changed somewhat from last year a little bit. It will be interesting to see how that kind of looks for us. But it's good to have him in the building. It's just another set of eyes, more information.

He's excited. He's been in and out of the building. He's not there every day like Marvin, but he'll be here for camp. We obviously show him the video all the time. He's well aware of what we're trying to do.

**Q. Any particular areas, secondary, passing game, that you are sort of really focused on that could have a big determining factor in whether you can play to your expectations?**

HERM EDWARDS: Well, I think a couple positions. You mentioned wide receiver core. The corners, two of our corners were drafted, as you know. Who is going to man those positions?

The offensive line, we lost some guys, but we brought in some guys with some playing experience, which I think will help us. How that gels together. Brought in a fantastic runner. How do we get that going, right?

At every position, linebacker, you got three guys that have played, now the Soelle brothers are all of a sudden playing together. That's unique. They're excited about that.

Defensive line, we're pretty stout up there if we can stay healthy. So I just think -- the tight end position, we brought in some tight ends. That will be kind of fun to watch and develop.

There's numerous positions that I just think the more we get into play, the more we'll find out about those guys.

**Q. With all of the changes that are taking place in college football, super conferences, maybe we're going to have unlimited transfers, NIL, how do you feel about the direction that the sport is headed?**

HERM EDWARDS: Well, it's kind of funny when you say that in the fact that the student-athlete has a voice. You just think about this conference alone. I can remember growing up on the West Coast, and it was the big five, big six. That was, what, in 1959 till 1964. Then it became the Pac-8, a conference that I played in at Cal Berkeley, right? There in '78 it switched over and became the Pac-10. Lo and behold in 2011, whatever it was, it became the Pac-12.

I think sometimes we sit here and we just realize the era that we're in, that's what we remember, right? So if you're in this new era, this is what it is. Well, it's changing.

I say this, and I say this in a humbled way. Change is about growth sometimes and opportunity. According to what and how you believe it and how you sit, it affects people different.

I look at myself. Without change, I'm not sitting here. I don't sit in this seat. So I don't look at it like, Well, this is going to mess up college football. It's going to change college football, no doubt about that.

The funny part is this. Everyone is trying to figure out what is it going to look like. We don't know. It might change again next week. No one knows. But eventually it will change.

Someone else will be sitting at this table. There will be new guys writing stories. They'll be talking about, Hey, you remember what happened back in 2022?

That's life. That's just how it works. We can hold onto whatever we want to hold onto. That's over with. You can't hold onto it. You got to adjust. Some will like it, some will not. That's just how it works now.

I think all of us are looking for answers. We don't have answers. We have opinions. Everybody can play commissioner and president and A.D., all those people, say, I would do it this way. That's great.

Eventually there's people with sound minds that are looking to do what's right for college football. That's the bottom line. I think the most visible thing that we all understand now, and maybe we kind of struggle with it, is the student-athlete has a voice. Some people don't like that.

Let me tell you something. We're just talking about football. How about women's sports? Let's don't forget them. They're involved in this, too. Let's don't get them, like, pushed to the side. They are student-athletes as well.

That's the big picture of it all going forward. That's how I view it from where I sit.

Sorry for the long answer.

**Q. Your thoughts about UCLA and USC to the Big Ten, departures, how that might impact the conference and Arizona State?**

HERM EDWARDS: I don't know if it's going to impact. I think what's impacted is more than just the realignment of teams going to different conferences, it's how do you go about recruiting now and what mechanism do you have in your conference to generate TV revenue? It's TV. It's driven by TV. Everyone in this audience knows that.

How can you generate dollars for your programs? That's what everyone is faced with right now. That is how it works. That's a new model, by the way. Everyone's trying to figure out what does that look like.

I'm just sitting here just watching it. I don't know what it's going to look like five years from now and what recruiting is going to look like.

I do know this: the player you have this season, you better re-recruit him when the season is over with because, if not, he might be playing somewhere else. That's how it works. You can't get mad 'cause that's just how it works now.

**Q. In regards to this team, what do you feel like is the team's identity so far? Do you feel like they have carved that out yet?**

HERM EDWARDS: Identity I think will -- our culture that has been probably in place for five years is that we have a toughness about ourselves. That's not going to change because it's coach led but it's player led. The players, those two gentlemen back there are part of that.

Our identity always has been toughness and compete. If you watch this team play, over the last four seasons, that's kind of been who we've been. We haven't won every game. We lost some games.

The sad part for us last year was the fact that some of it was due to our own error, right? We got to fix that, for sure. But it's always been toughness. It's always been compete, just compete, as hard as you can compete, then you can live with the result.

**Q. Some of the players recently said that last year with the NCAA investigation, it was distracting because players didn't know what the coaching situation was, position coaches coming and going. Do you feel like the worst of that is behind you? Have things settled in that regard?**

HERM EDWARDS: I think our players and our staff did a great job of having to deal with all that. It's just another testament to the mental toughness that these guys had last year.

When you go through things like that, it brings you together. Every season is a different journey. If you lose some players and you gain some players, you're just trying to find out their identity.

It's a pretty tight football team right now, what I've learned. You're talking about 43 new players that chose to come here. I think we all get worried about the players that leave. I don't worry about guys leaving. Who are we getting, right? Who wants to come here?

We had a lot of talented players to sign on. That's kind of fun to watch.

**Q. With regard to the investigation, do you get a feeling you guys are getting closer to the conclusion of that?**

HERM EDWARDS: You know what, I can't comment on stuff like that. You guys know that. We're getting ready to kick the season off. We start practicing next Tuesday, which is going to be exciting for us. The players can't wait

to get on the grass. Neither can the coaches.

NFL, they're starting to go to camp. First thing you worry about, you don't want to get anybody injured the first day of training camp. Our guys are excited about getting back on the grass. So are the coaches.

Thank you for the question.

**Q. You mentioned Brian Billick being at BYU. What are your memories of playing Brian and BYU in '76?**

HERM EDWARDS: He wasn't as good as he thought he was (laughter). I want to say -- was Gifford Nielsen the quarterback?

**Q. He was, yes.**

HERM EDWARDS: It was a low-scoring game, I know that. Either team didn't get over 10 points, I don't think. They beat us. I can remember it was a very physical game. We had a pretty good defense. We played a lot of what we do now, cat coverage, man-to-man. They had a lot of talented receivers. We did a pretty good job of defending those guys.

But it was a low-scoring affair. It wasn't like in today's world, 30 to 40. I don't think any team got to 15 points.

**Q. 8-0.**

HERM EDWARDS: There you go. That's a fan favorite, 8-0, right?

**Q. Not a lot of defenses ever held a LaVell Edwards team to eight points. Obviously he transformed the game. How much did that sort of set the stage for how college football is played today in terms of offense?**

HERM EDWARDS: I'm glad you mentioned his name. I was one of the first Black recruits he recruited out of high school, LaVell. I actually took a visit to BYU. Great man. I didn't go there, ended up going to Cal.

It's funny because later on when I played I want to say the Japan Bowl, Hula Bowl, one of those deals, he was an assistant coach for one of those teams. We laughed and said, Finally get to coach me now, Coach, and I get to play for you, right?

Great man. Had a vision. You're right, that was kind of the deal of college football was kind of looking this way, and BYU, they had the number of quarterbacks going through there, Steve Young being one of them, a good friend of mine, and other guys obviously.

He was a little ahead of the curve. He was. Great man. We all miss him. Great football coach.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, coach.

HERM EDWARDS: Thank you.

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