

Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

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San Francisco, California, USA

Commissioner

George Kliavkoff

Teresa Gould

Lisa Peterson

Rhonda Lundin Bennett

Ann Schatz



The truth is that college sports has been in desperate need of change. While it's not ideal to have that change thrust upon us by external forces, the result in my view will be a better and stronger college sports landscape.

NIL has been a very positive development. For the first time, allowing our student-athletes to enjoy the same opportunities as all other students, to monetize their brands and talents. There is work to be done to ensure that we have a single set of NIL rules that are equally enforced across the country. But despite some early abuses, NIL itself is a huge net positive for college sports.

While we don't yet know where the NCAA transformation process will land, I believe we are on the right path to restructure the oversight of college athletics.

I believe that part of the outcome will be to allow similarly situated universities and conferences to have more control over our destinies and much better positioned to support our student-athletes.

On the college football front, we have been strong supporters of expanding the college football Playoffs to provide more access for our universities and our student-athletes, and it is great news that that will soon be a reality.

I know everyone continues to have interest in the current round of realignment. With respect to the Pac-12, I can tell you that our 10 schools are together, aligned, and committed to our conference. We are actively negotiating our next media rights agreements, and there is great interest in the marketplace due to the strength of our schools' brands and markets.

We are fortunate to be able to talk to both our incumbent partners and potential new partners in the open market, allowing us to think creatively about how to distribute our media rights starting the season after next.

We remain open to expansion that makes sense for the conference at the appropriate time.

For all these reasons, we are incredibly bullish about the

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us, and welcome to 2022 Pac-12 women's basketball media day. To lead us off I'd like to welcome commissioner George Kliavkoff for some opening remarks.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Thank you, John, and welcome to our 2022 Pac-12 women's basketball media day.

I'd like to first recognize and thank our student-athletes and coaches for being here today to represent their schools and the Pac-12 Conference.

I'd also like to thank our media partners, sponsors, and of course, all of our attending press members, without whom we could not showcase and support Pac-12 women's basketball and our student-athletes.

Our conference continues to invest in women's basketball, and we continue to expect great results, including tournament bids, Final Fours, and National Championships.

In a few minutes, Teresa Gould, our deputy commissioner and head of women's basketball, will explain why we are so optimistic and excited about this season and about the future of Pac-12 women's basketball.

I'll focus my allotted time on broader issues related to the Pac-12 and college athletics.

There has been more change in college athletics during my first 15 months on the job than anyone could have anticipated. But despite the rapidly changing environment, I remain optimistic about the future of college sports.



future growth and success of the Pac-12. I hope you all get to spend a lot of time today with our student-athletes and our terrific coaches. I look forward to returning to the stage shortly to answer your questions, but first I'd like to turn it over to Teresa for a deeper dive on Pac-12 women's basketball. Please welcome Teresa Gould.

(Applause.)

TERESA GOULD: Good morning. This is like my favorite day of the year. It means women's basketball season is officially starting. We can cheer for that. That's a good thing. (Applause.)

I too want to thank our student-athletes and coaches for taking time away from campus to be here today, along with our partners and, of course, the members of the media. I appreciate so much the coverage that you all provide Pac-12 women's basketball.

You're an important part of the Pac-12 women's basketball family, and your presence here today means a lot.

Please know your passion and interest in our women's basketball programs does not go unnoticed. Nothing inspires me more than spending time with our extraordinary student-athletes and learning about their stories, and I'm excited that all of you will have the opportunity to get to know them throughout the day, as well.

As we prepare to tip off another season, I continue to be in awe of the accomplishments of our coaches and student-athletes in this league. Year in and year out, by just about any metric, the Pac-12 has established itself as the best women's basketball conference in the country.

Over the past seven seasons, Pac-12 women's basketball leads all conferences in Final Four appearances, non-conference winning percentage, NCAA Tournament wins, NCAA Tournament winning percentage, and WBCA All-Americans.

Stanford's appearance in the national semifinals last season was the 20th for the conference all-time, and of those 20 Final Four appearances, more than one-third have come in just the past six NCAA tournaments.

Going back even further, the Pac-12 also leads all conferences in Final Four appearances, since 2012-2013, with nine. Those nine appearances have been spread across six different Pac-12 programs, which is two more than any other conference.

Simply put, in an amazing display of depth, half of the

Pac-12 has appeared in a Final Four in the past nine NCAA tournaments.

Six Pac-12 teams earned NCAA Tournament berths in 2022, the fifth consecutive postseason to feature at least half of our league, and at least five conference programs have earned bids in eight consecutive NCAA tournaments.

As you all are aware, the 2021-2022 season was the second year using the NCAA evaluation tool, the NET, as we call it, for women's basketball, and every one of our 12 teams finished in the top 100, including eight in the top 50.

Additionally, the Pac-12 was one of only two leagues that had all of its teams in the top 100, further demonstrating the depth we have in this league and the ongoing investment in our programs.

As much as I love bragging about past success, we're here today to look forward to the 2022-2023 season, and I can tell you that Pac-12 women's basketball shows no signs of slowing down. With our programs having attracted the nation's top prep talent and record-setting 2022 recruiting classes.

Pac-12 programs signed 23 student-athletes from the 2022 ESPNW Hoop Girls top 100, who arrived on our campuses this fall, including seven of the top 10 prospects.

Six of the nation's top 14 classes were put together by Pac-12 programs, including each of the top three and five of the top eight.

In available data going back a dozen years, no conference has finished a recruiting cycle with as many programs boasting top-10 classes.

Pac-12 programs also signed three top-10 classes in each of the previous three years, totals which led or tied for the national lead in each recruiting cycle. Of the 24 women selected to play in the 2022 McDonald's All-American game, a national best 11 are on Pac-12 rosters this season.

The Pac-12 continues to be a destination for the nation's brightest and best and a place where student-athletes can have it all. They can compete for NCAA championships, get a world-class education and engage in campus and community life in ways that allow them to meet their full potential athletically, academically and personally.

Not only do the nation's best high school players choose to attend Pac-12 institutions, but we have a tremendous track record of positioning them for success during their time on Pac-12 campuses.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Since 2015-2016, the Pac-12 leads all conferences with 15 WBCA All-Americans. Our conference has had multiple WBCA All-Americans for four consecutive seasons, and six times in the past seven years.

We also boast an NCAA high 18 USBWA first, second and third-team All-Americans since 2015-2016. And post college, the Pac-12 has had multiple first-round WNBA draft selections in each of the past six drafts, an active streak that leads all leagues by more than three years.

Finally, three of the past six Wade Trophy winners have been from the Pac-12.

The Pac-12's success has been guided by an incredible roster of trail blazing coaches who are among the brightest minds in the game. Not only does the conference boast the winningest coach in the history of women's college basketball in Stanford's Tara VanDerveer, but we also have three of the 35 winningest active Division I coaches by win percentage, a total tied for the most among Power Five leagues.

Five of our head coaches have led a team to the Final Four.

In addition to their success on the court, this extraordinary group of coaches provide leadership off the court, as well. They serve in positions of influence with the NCAA and WBCA to grow the game. They advocate for gender equity. They promote social justice and civic engagement and champion women in coaching.

The commitment of our coaches to use their platforms to take on the important issues of our time inspires me every day.

At the conference level, I was recently able to add two highly respected veterans within college athletics to my team, both of whom have extensive backgrounds in women's basketball. Rhonda Lundin Bennett, who chaired the NCAA Division I women's basketball committee in 2018 and 2019 began at the Pac-12 last month as our associate commissioner for women's basketball.

Rhonda will spearhead the conference's strategic planning efforts to elevate, advance and grow our women's basketball brand.

Lisa Peterson started at the Pac-12 just last week as senior associate commissioner for sport management and will be responsible for the comprehensive oversight of our 21 Olympic sports.

We were thrilled that just last week, Lisa was named the current chair of the NCAA Division I women's basketball committee, an incredible recognition of her expertise in women's basketball.

Both Rhonda and Lisa are nationally respected leaders who are passionate about women's basketball and growing the game. I truly feel like I have assembled a bit of a Dream Team right here at the Pac-12, and look forward to partnering with them to enhance the service to our membership and employ the strategic thinking around women's basketball that will take our league to unprecedented heights.

I'd like to take a quick moment to touch on the upcoming season's coverage of Pac-12 women's basketball, including a couple of really important highlights to our schedule.

This season, a record number of broadcasts will air on the Pac-12 networks, 132 games, supported by enhanced studio programming during pregame, halftime and postgame during league play.

In addition, another six broadcasts will air on the ESPN family of networks, two Pac-12 home games will air on ABC, including the blockbuster South Carolina at Stanford game on November 20, which of course features the past two NCAA national champions.

One of the highlights of the regular season that I am most excited about will be the inaugural addition of the Pac-12/SWAC Legacy Series featuring six women's games alongside six men's games.

The series represents a first-of-its-kind partnership between a Power Five and HBCU conference with the goal of creating a forum for competition as well as meaningful educational opportunities for our coaches and student-athletes in the critically important area of social justice.

The name of the series is tied to a collaboration with the equal justice initiative's legacy museum, and the series itself was born out of this summer's Pac-12 impact trip to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama.

The trip, which included two women's basketball student-athletes journeyed to the center of the Civil Rights Movement, and visited the Equal Justice Initiative Museum among many other historic sites.

I was fortunate to have made the trip myself to Selma and Montgomery with our student-athletes, and can honestly say the experience was life changing for everyone in

attendance. I believe the partnership with the SWAC will also provide an unforgettable opportunity to learn more about our HBCU institutions and to use the positive impact of those learnings to build a better society for all.

The regular season will once again conclude with our Pac-12 women's basketball tournament in Las Vegas, which has had an incredible run at the entertainment capital of the world with thrilling contests and packed arenas.

The Pac-12 networks will air the first 10 contest, the first round of the tournament through the semifinals, with the championship game again being televised on ESPN on Sunday, March 5.

As part of our year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Title IX, for the first time ever the Pac-12 hall of honor event will take place during the women's tournament and will include an all-female class of inductees.

As you can see, there is so much to be excited about when it comes to Pac-12 women's basketball. With an immense amount of returning talent, we are well positioned to continue our success this coming season.

10 all-conference, 5 all-freshmen, two defensive honorees return for this season, including the league's Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, Freshman of the Year, Sixth Player of the Year, and co-most improved Player of the Year.

There is so much to look forward to this season, and today's activities provide a tremendous activity to promote our student-athletes and tell their amazing stories.

Before we begin the first moderated Q & A session with my dear friend and colleague Ann Schatz, I want to take a moment to recognize Ann for having won a Northwest Emmy Award this summer in the category of best sports play-by-play or analyst.

Ann has been an outstanding play-by-play announcer for over 40 years and has been with the Pac-12 networks since our launch over a decade ago. Ann is the first woman to have ever won this particular Emmy.

Ann, we are so proud to call you one of our own and are beyond appreciative of your commitment to our student-athletes and to Pac-12 women's basketball. On behalf of the Pac-12, I'm thrilled to have my friend Ann come up here today and present her with her award in recognition of her ongoing excellence in her profession.

(Applause.)

ANN SCHATZ: All right then.

TERESA GOULD: We can just put this here for everybody to see it.

ANN SCHATZ: No, no. Give it up.

(Applause.)

Thank you very much. That was something, and it was a surprise, and it reminded me -- quickly, Teresa mentioned the word Pac-12 family, and for those of us in this room who have been fortunate enough to be a part of this family, for however many years, from inception -- I don't care if it's the day before yesterday, it is indeed a family.

Can you imagine what those producers had to do to dig around and find some kind of a highlight reel to give to the committee that was acceptable? Lord have mercy. God bless them for digging.

But let's talk about why we're here today, and that is to celebrate this conference, our women's basketball players, teams, coaches, managers, media relations directors, anyone who has anything to do with women's basketball at this conference. You are the engine, and we're going to go like hell to make sure that this year -- the next couple of years are going to be like nothing else. The next couple of years are going to be like nothing else.

We're going to throw the gloves off. We're going to get after it. We're going to get busy. We're going to have fun. We're going to win. We're going to support each other, and we're going to love every single second.

Thanks for being here.

Teresa, I'm delighted to share the stage with you, and I can't wait to bring up Rhonda and Lisa. There we go. Come on.

(Applause.)

The Dream Team. Let's get some Q & As going. Everybody has got their mics, water bottles --

Teresa, you mentioned the success of the conference in its entirety in terms of the Power Five and the success that we have had on the floor. That's all wonderful. I would love for you all to weigh in on the success academically of our teams, our women, the coaches who are invaluable in making sure that our women understand and embrace the idea of what this education is going to do for them, in addition to their mad skills on the floor. I would love it if



you guys weighed in on that.

TERESA GOULD: Yeah, and Ann, I appreciate you asking that question, right, because buried in all of those accolades of success is the student-athlete experience, right, and for us in this league, one of the things I've always loved about being part of the Pac-12 is the focus on our mission and the student-athlete experience and why we're here.

We are here to develop leaders for the journey after college and after women's basketball, and as I said in my comments, I've always believed that the Pac-12 provides a unique experience in that regard.

Our campuses believe passionately about the holistic experience and supporting student-athletes, and I would say women's basketball student-athletes have been leaders in that space.

When you look at our APR and our graduation rates and the academic performance of the young women in our programs, when you look at their community and civic engagement and what they do off the court, it's really obvious that they came to the Pac-12 and they came to their campus not just to win basketball National Championships and win games and be competitive and maybe have a career in the WNBA, but they came to our league to make a difference in society.

There's so many stories, and I encourage all of you to pursue those stories today and have those conversations with our student-athletes. But the academic piece is a significant part of that.

For many of these young women, women's basketball is the opportunity that is providing them that access to get that education, that in many instances changes the course of their life.

We're really proud of the young women in our programs. We're proud of the way our campuses emphasize academics and community involvement and civic engagement, and I think our women's basketball student-athletes are great leaders in that space.

ANN SCHATZ: Lisa and Rhonda, Lisa, coming from the 11 years at the University of Oregon, the impact that you made there and echoing I would imagine what Teresa just said, Rhonda the decades at Nevada, if you could help us understand what some of your experiences have been like to lead you to this greatness in terms of emphasis on academics.

LISA PETERSON: Well, on campuses, yes, we always

say that at some point their sport is going to end, whether that's when they're done with college, they go pro, they go overseas, whatever that looks like.

For us to be able to provide the education and the opportunities for them to be prepared whenever that season or that career ends. So there is a lot of emphasis that gets put into student-athlete development across all 12 conference institutions to show all of the things that they do need to learn and that they do need to pay attention to for when that day comes.

It is a big emphasis. For the media I know it's just what happens on the court, but that's just a small percentage of the time they spend with us at the institutions.

Just really excited about what we've seen, the leaders that have come out of this league, certainly in the sport of basketball but also beyond that. So it is a really big emphasis, and they are students first.

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Yeah, and I think for me, being on campus and being able to meet those student-athletes from the time that they're in high school and they're coming on the recruiting visits when they finish their career and see what they accomplish both academically and socially and we've just had so many women's basketball players who really truly understand their role as a student and an athlete, and I think that's really what's special about this sport, being able to see the way that they grow and change and hopefully help change the world.

ANN SCHATZ: Teresa, you mentioned some of the huge games that are coming up on our network and beyond this season for the Pac-12 Conference in women's hoops. Any other little nuggets that any of you three would love to throw out in terms of what you're most excited about for this upcoming season? Not just the big televised games, what are those little things, maybe under the radar, where you're thinking, maybe here's a moment or a player or an event that I'm looking forward to?

TERESA GOULD: Well, I know I referenced in my comments the SWAC-HBCU Legacy Series, and another event that I know John did a great job of promoting was the Coast-to-Coast Challenge in Dallas in December.

I think a couple things. Like the one thing that I really, really respect and appreciate about our coaches is they will play anyone, any time, and they view that as their responsibility to the conference and to their program, to play against the best, to be the best.

So I appreciate not only the high-profile match-ups that we



will see on ESPN, but the ones that maybe aren't on ESPN. It's not that easy out west. Not everybody is willing to travel out west and play our teams, so I appreciate their willingness to play the tough schedule.

But I think the experiential part of it is what I'm most excited about, and when I think about the SWAC Legacy Series and the opportunity that it provides for our coaches and our student-athletes and our support staff to experience something that hopefully will change them and motivate them to be those stewards in our community of social justice issues and to really open their minds to the HBCU campuses and the way of life.

I think it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not just for our student-athletes, but for those HBCU student-athletes that maybe have never been on some of our campuses.

At the end of the day, college athletics is just full of making memories, and those are the pieces that you always remember, and I look forward to those Legacy Series match-ups and just learning and hearing from those student-athletes what that experience meant to them.

ANN SCHATZ: When it comes to the committee, ladies, we understand all too well that strength of schedule, who you play, where you play, at what point of the season do you play, all that stuff matters when those bids are coming out, correct?

I'd love for you to weigh in on the committee paying close attention to everything this conference does and beyond.

LISA PETERSON: So with the NET, I know it's been an adjustment because the first year that women's basketball had the NET was 2021, which was the COVID year, and there were some leagues that didn't even play outside of their league. So it was hard for coaches to wrap their heads around how that tool works.

Then last year, again, there was a lot of contests that weren't actually completed.

I am looking forward to having a full year of the NET tool being able to help us. But all of those things matter. Where you play it, the time of year that you play it. Actually the NET is what evaluates the efficiency, so how many times you score when you have the ball and how many times you stop them from scoring when they have the ball.

So all of those things matter. Playing in the big games and playing against the other A5 conferences is very big for our institutions.

At the same time, playing in that HBCU, that is something

that you don't pass up on an opportunity like that. That will be something that is talked about.

But just really excited about this league this year. I know that the polls came out and Stanford was picked to win, but anybody can win any game on any night in this league, and I think that's one of the most exciting things about Pac-12 women's basketball.

ANN SCHATZ: Rhonda, your history shows us how important that scheduling is and how important timing of games and results of games, correct?

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Yeah, and I think that's one way where the Pac-12 schools have really excelled in figuring out which match-ups they should have, and then quite frankly winning those non-conference match-ups. I think that's really important, not just scheduling them, but winning them. I think that is one of the things I am most excited about about joining the conference, and being able to work closely with our women's basketball teams is just their commitment to excellence in all areas, including their non-conference schedule and their non-conference success.

ANN SCHATZ: Let's talk about Las Vegas a little bit in terms of our tournament being held there again. The great success of going to that city and the trajectory of perhaps the future and it staying there.

Teresa, could you start?

TERESA GOULD: Yeah, well, I have to say, and I have to credit the boss in the back row for a lot of the success that we've experienced in Vegas. I will say, from day one -- you all might recall when we made the move from Seattle by necessity because the facility being renovated, to Las Vegas, we weren't sure. The coaches weren't sure.

We landed in the entertainment capital of the world, and it has been off the charts successful from day one.

Part of that is the interest in our product. We have a caliber of women's basketball that people want to see. People want to come to the venue and experience high-caliber women's basketball.

Then on top of it, you have the benefit of being in Las Vegas, with all of the entertainment options and fun that exists in that city.

It's been a great experience for us, and our student-athletes love being there. Our families love being there. We get tremendous support from the Las Vegas community to make it a high-quality student athlete

experience.

That being said, there are a lot of cities that are interested in our tournament. We have grown it to the point with our attendance and with our fan support that it's an event that people want. We'll take it year by year, Ann, and see where we go from here, but we're looking forward to being in Vegas this year and having more sell-out crowds and great women's basketball and a great student-athlete experience.

ANN SCHATZ: TV ratings, that moves the needle, as well. Women's basketball has never been more popular. The ratings have never been more robust. That's across the board. I would love for all three of you to chime in on the importance of the Pac-12 networks and what the networks have done, what the Pac-12 networks have done in terms of elevating our game, creating more exposure for our athletes, and helping folks understand the importance and power of this conference in women's basketball.

If you could all three chime in, that would be great.

LISA PETERSON: Just the fact that what Teresa said earlier was that 132 games are going to be played on the network. That's incredible. Certainly from an NCAA committee perspective, being able to see all of those games, that's what you have to do to be able to rank those teams. That is hugely important.

But then the other thing that I really appreciate about the networks is it's not just the games. It's the storytelling around it where you really get to know the student-athletes and you get to know their personalities and things that are outside of the game, and I think that's what draws you in and that's how you become a fan not just of women's basketball, but of those student-athletes and of the game. So it's incredibly important.

ANN SCHATZ: Rhonda, you were a media relations director at Arizona State, so you understand the importance of storytelling as you rose the ranks and where you ended up at Nevada. Please help us understand the importance of these networks, the coverage and just how we shine a light on these special women.

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Yeah, I think Lisa said it best, just the ability to tell the stories of the student-athletes. It used to be that women's basketball would get a TV game here and there, but at the Pac-12 Conference, nearly every women's basketball game has that kind of exposure for fans to get to know the teams.

As I've traveled around the country, people watch those games, and they really enjoy getting to know the

student-athletes more on a personal level, in addition to the amazing things that they do on the court. I just think as a former communications person, being able to have that outlet to tell your stories and to Lisa's point about the NCAA committee -- when I first started on the committee in 2014, to be able to watch all those games and see the teams, I think it's helped the conference grow and continue to have that national spotlight.

It definitely helps the committee to really be able to fully evaluate the student-athletes and the teams in our conference. Even though we play at later times or maybe aren't in those West Coast -- in the East Coast primetime windows, it really helps everyone to be able to watch and see how great a product the Pac-12 Conference women's basketball is.

ANN SCHATZ: Do we trust that more and more eyeballs regarding the committee are on our conference? Can we trust that's happening?

LISA PETERSON: Absolutely.

ANN SCHATZ: Why do you say that?

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Lisa will yell at them if they don't.

ANN SCHATZ: Seriously, you guys are in the trenches.

LISA PETERSON: No, there was a change for the chair that was supposed to be on the committee. She changed conferences, and so I am elevated into the chair position without having that year of training in the vice chair role, so be patient with me for the first year.

But no, it's an incredible group of -- it's now 12 administrators from campuses and conference offices that really are invested in women's basketball and the changing landscape of what that looks like, and they want to do everything that's possible to elevate the game of women's basketball.

Watching games -- if it really was just about numbers, we wouldn't need people. You could just take the NET ranking and slot them in. But it's really not about that. So watching the games really matters, and this group is really invested in that.

ANN SCHATZ: Ladies, short-term, long-term goals for Pac-12 women's basketball. Go.

TERESA GOULD: Well, so there's always two parts of that, and I'm always going to come back to we have the aspirational competitive goals, and the competitive goals



are about sustained excellence, and to me sustained excellence is how many teams are we getting to the postseason, how far are they advancing in the tournament, and the priority for us in recent years in regards to that sustained excellence has been depth.

It's been so exciting to see over the last few years a Utah, a Colorado, a Washington State, and see some of our programs that haven't had deep experience in the NCAA Tournament get back to that point.

So we're super proud of those programs, and I am so appreciative of the investment from our athletic directors and our SWAs in those programs, because we need to have a league where all 12 of our programs are in the conversation, which they are.

I would say competitively, the goal is sustained excellence, and that year after year after year we have -- the majority of our league, we should be in a position where we're looking at eight or ten or everybody in our league being in on the conversation. That's the competitive piece of it.

But I would also say, Ann, for us, we're always going to go back to that student-athlete experience, and in this league -- yet we want to win National Championships. We want to have every team in the NCAA Tournament. We want to continue to stand up here year after year and talk about all those metrics where we're dominating the country in terms of those competitive metrics.

But we also have to remember what business we are in, and we are in the business of developing leaders. So in this league, we will also always have strategic goals around community engagement, around supporting our student-athletes. George talked about NIL. We have a responsibility as leaders on our campuses and in this conference to support our student-athletes and develop them in that space.

I think for me, the short-term and the long-term is both let's continue to make sure that we're providing a first-class student-athlete experience so the Pac-12 continues to be a destination spot for the country's brightest and best, and let's make sure that that sustained excellence continues and that next year we're not just talking about six teams, we're talking about eight, we're talking about 10, we're talking about 12. Everybody is getting out of the first and second round, and we have multiple teams vying for National Championships.

ANN SCHATZ: Love that. Lisa?

LISA PETERSON: Well, that was very well said. I'm not sure I can go off of that.

No, when you look at women's basketball and the reason why those student-athletes come to the institutions in our conference is for that academic and that social side of things, but also for the basketball excellence.

Look at the WNBA and look at the number of players that the Pac-12 has in the WNBA in Kelsey Plum, our alum, winning that title this year, and just all of those things. That's what attracts the best and the brightest to conferences like that.

It's because then they can see themselves in that path going forward, and that's what I hope we continue to do is to provide that path.

Yes, NIL is a part of that. All the things that tie into that. But that this becomes, I know if I go there and I put in the work that this is what my future is going to be.

ANN SCHATZ: Rhonda, we're going to bring this train to the station with you, Oregonian, native of Hillsboro, correct?

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Yes.

ANN SCHATZ: Got your start at Arizona State, one of the foundational pieces at Arizona State, grew up in Pac-10, Pac-12 country if you will, and then the decades served at Nevada.

So coming back to the Pac-12, if you will goals, short- and long-term; what are you seeing?

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: Well, I think being able to provide that excellence and that support to our student-athletes, our coaches and our programs is my main short-term goal. We're doing such great things on our campuses and being able to provide that support to help them continue those things, supporting the initiatives that the Pac-12 is doing like the SWAC/Pac-12 Legacy Series and the other educational initiatives, really providing great support to our campuses and our coaches and our student-athletes in that regard.

And then for me, it's kind of a cool bookend to have Arizona State in the late '90s, early 2000s and to obviously be a part of the commitment to excellence that the Pac-12 has had and really being able to elevate our women's basketball programs and then being able to join the conference and being able to support what's already happened in all the championships and excellence that we already have but also help grow and elevate that brand and do what I can to grow and support that.

ANN SCHATZ: Teresa, you're right about the Dream Team. Well done. This is a trifecta up here. Thanks.

Welcome, obviously, to the administrative roles here at the conference and with the networks, and we're delighted to have you with us.

Teresa, keep doing what you're doing, baby. Keep doing what you're doing.

TERESA GOULD: Don't forget your Emmy.

ANN SCHATZ: Sure. We're moving along. I'm abdicating the stage. Johnny, you're up next.

Q. This is for Teresa and George. Teresa, you just went over how wonderful the Pac-12 is for women's basketball, what a powerhouse it is. You have two historically great programs that are scheduled to leave in two years. I'm wondering if both of you could address that issue that's going to loom over the next two seasons and also the fact that certain decisions in college sports seem to be made solely with football in mind and are hurting women's sports powerhouse conferences.

TERESA GOULD: Obviously the USC/UCLA decision is disappointing. For those of you in the room who know me, I've been in this league for almost 20 years, so it is disappointing that an association and a tradition of this magnitude is going away.

That being said, it is our role, my role, George's role for all of us that work in the conference to forge a path forward that is positive for this conference and for these student-athletes.

Two things that we've been laser focused on. One of them is that during this time of transition between now and 2024, we are still here to serve 7,000 student-athletes, and that includes the student-athletes from USC and UCLA. So we are working hard to make sure during this time of transition and uncertainty that all of our student-athletes are supported and that the student-athletes from those institutions don't see a change.

The second thing, and I know George touched upon this, is we are laser focused on what does our future look like. We have to move forward, and we have an obligation to the remaining 10 institutions and those remaining student-athletes to move forward with a conference that affords them the opportunity to do all the things that they came to the Pac-12 to do.

So that is very much our focus, and we feel great about the

10 remaining institutions that we have in our conference, particularly in the women's basketball space, given the success that we've had with those remaining 10, and we'll continue to look to the future to build a conference that serves the needs of our student-athletes, including an elite, high-caliber women's basketball conference.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I would agree with everything Teresa said. She does make it easy.

I would add that I lament the fact that there are some decisions being made for apparent short-term financial gains. I'm not even sure there are financial gains, but that undoubtedly is the reason those decisions were made, and that's unfortunate.

It may be okay for football athletes who have to travel very few times across the country, but I really, really worry about the student-athletes in all of our other sports who will have to travel and miss academic days on campus, put their bodies through the stress of going across multiple time zones to play conference games.

We're very focused, as Teresa said, on our 10 and on kind of making sure that we have our media rights and other deals in place that allow us to have the opportunity to expand if we want.

In the very short-term, after we get through next season, we will have to -- if we don't expand, focus on how to pick up through scheduling some top-tier games to replace the games our teams are going to miss against UCLA and USC.

Q. Teresa, you mentioned other cities interested in hosting the women's basketball tournament, Seattle with its new Climate Pledge Arena led the attendance in WNBA action this season, and is a set site for regional coverage in the NCAA Tournament; so is Seattle one of the cities, and who else is interested?

TERESA GOULD: Yeah, there are multiple cities up and down the Pac-12 footprint, as you can imagine. Like all of the same cities that have put in bids for NCAA rounds, whether it's Seattle or Portland or Phoenix or Sacramento, there are a number of cities in the west that I think would love to have a conversation about the Pac-12 tournament.

We're at a point right now where we're kind of evaluating what's best in both the short-term and the long-term, and with a lot of uncertainty on the horizon, I don't think we're going to move swiftly with any significant moves.

But there is a lot of interest, and that's a real testament to our programs and our staff who have built a product that

our community really wants.

But to answer your question, many of the cities that have also bid for NCAA rounds are the same cities that have expressed interest in our tournament.

Q. George, on an NCAA level, what kind of counsel are you getting from the NCAA regarding the Dobbs decision, and are female student-athletes in states, in particular I would say Arizona and Utah naming, where there are abortion bans now in place or are going to be in place in terms of those rights? I know there are stories being written about how there's not a lot of guidance right now for schools on how to handle female student-athletes and issues around the abortion issue, and I'm wondering what the NCAA is telling you all about what's going to happen.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I haven't had a single conversation with the NCAA about that.

Q. George, you mentioned media rights just a couple of questions ago. In particular with women's basketball, it seems across the board NCAA level, WNBA level, even in the FIBA World Cup we saw a huge number of people tune in at 11:00 West Coast time, let alone 2:00 in the morning, and for a while it seemed as if the Pac-12 has had their own network do a lot and the ESPN growth in terms of games on the network has stagnated. As you guys kind of look at this opportunity in two years to have a new deal, how much do you need to be focused on women's basketball as a potential spot for you guys to kind of have a massive growth of potential revenue opportunities and inventory and game volume for your new deal?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I think women's basketball is our fastest growing television sport. Ratings are growing faster than any other sport, and I think it's one of the sports that has been undervalued traditionally in media rights.

I think that provides a great opportunity. I will tell you as we're in the open market, as we're talking to all the potential distributors, they want to talk about women's basketball and they want to talk about how to highlight our women's basketball programs.

They understand the quality of our programs and they understand more importantly the ratings it will draw for them.

Q. Especially because of the fact at the NCAA level there's been the report that is out that they may have undervalued the women's basketball tournament alone

by almost, if not more than \$100 million. Does that to you, as somebody negotiating that with some of the top programs in the country, maybe kind of raise the lightbulb of we could really sell our programs up in that way? How much is this an opportunity for this conference and these 10 schools that are going to be here to capitalize on this moment?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Yeah, it's a huge part of what's going to drive our media value, which I think we're going to be very proud of when we're done with our deals.

Q. George, following up on that, when you talk about it, the narrative has been football, football, football, football as far as the media rights. How much does it come up in conversation, what you're talking about with the women's and men's basketball?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: There's not a single distributor that we've talked to about our media rights that has only been interested in football. They're interested in all of our rights, but it's driven by football, men's and women's basketball, and then our great success in Olympic sports. We talk about women's basketball with every single potential media distributor.

Q. Teresa, there's been a lot of -- there were 10 transfers this year within the conference, teams from one team in the conference that transferred to another. Do you have any concerns about just the collegiality of the programs and that when you guys have the most transfers per number of schools of any conference in the country? I think the SEC has 11 inter-conference transfers but they have 14 teams. What are your concerns about that level of transferring within the conference?

TERESA GOULD: I am not concerned about that number. We look at the comps just to see if there was anything to be gleaned from that, and I think our numbers are similar to the other A 5s in that regard.

Honestly, that's a byproduct of the environment that we're in. Like with these new transfer portal opportunities, that's going to happen. Quite candidly, while sometimes it creates difficult challenges among our coaching staffs, we would prefer that those elite-level talents stay in our league.

I would much rather have those 10 student-athletes stay in the Pac-12 than to go to another Power Five conference. We want to try to keep the elite-level women's basketball student-athletes in our league. I'm not worried about the numbers. I'm not worried about the trends. Quite candidly, our coaches, they're competitive, they're passionate. They

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

don't want to lose a student-athlete from our program.

But at the end of the day they see the big picture, and I think they would also agree that keeping the talent level in the Pac-12 to allow us to maintain our national competitiveness is the priority.

It's not something I'm worried about.

Q. Both Rhonda and Lisa, Rhonda, because you were the chair, and Lisa, as you're going to be the chair, I would just wonder from a position where you're trying to view every single women's basketball team in the country probably as often as you can. How much has the availability of streaming networks, places like ESPN+ that can have every conference game you can basically watch them every time, how has that kind of changed the role when you had it, Rhonda, and how much does that, as you get into it, Lisa, does that shaped the role going forward?

RHONDA LUNDIN BENNETT: I think it's amazing exposure, and for people who are on the committee you are trying to watch every team, and to be able to have a Pac-12 Network that makes it so easy to watch so many games and so many match-ups.

I know when I was on the committee I would basically block off Friday nights and Sunday afternoons to be able to just watch games from the time that they started until the time that they ended.

I really had the great opportunity that I was the Pac-12 conference monitor for most of my time on the committee, and so I think it's just invaluable to be able to have these opportunities to view games both on linear TV, but also to view them on digital networks, as well.

LISA PETERSON: Yeah, watching games, like I said, if you don't watch games it's really hard to evaluate the teams because numbers are just numbers, and that's what really matters when you're trying to rank those teams. I like to do it both ways.

I like to do it where you record the game that's happening on television because I like to hear the announcer sometimes, so for the announcers in the room, you do have an impact.

But being able to watch the games, having them available, that's the only way that we can actually do justice to the teams that we're trying to put into the tournament, to actually see them play.

Q. You mentioned the announcers in the room, so I'll

throw this right back at you. 132 games available on Pac-12 networks; how many of those will be staffed with play-by-play and analysts? How many will be streamed?

LISA PETERSON: I don't know that I have that answer.

TERESA GOULD: Well, that 132 are all linear broadcasts that are going to be on the Pac-12 Network. Was part of your question around streaming?

Q. Some of them are going to be streamed productions and (indiscernible) I appreciate the 132, but to accurately tell these stories like we want to, they need to be staffed with professionals.

TERESA GOULD: Are you talking about the production staff or the talent?

Q. Both.

TERESA GOULD: I'm not sure I have that answer. We have networks folks in the room, but I'm not sure I have that information.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, George, Rhonda, Lisa, Teresa. Appreciate your time this morning. We will begin with our coaches and student-athletes at 11:00 with Utah.

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