

# Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

San Francisco, California, USA

**Oregon Ducks**

**Coach Kelly Graves**

**Te-Hina Paopao**

**Endyia Rogers**

Women's Head Coach



It changes who we are and how we can play when we can play through her.

We have yet to see her best, I think, just simply because of some injury issues and things like that. She's always played alongside a high-level pro, as well. So now it's kind of her time to shine.

KELLY GRAVES: Good to see everybody. Welcome to a new year. I hope '22-' 23 is going to be a great season for everybody. Excited to be here. Really excited to have two of the nation's best guards that comprises one of the nation's best back courts here with me.

That's my opening statement.

**Q. I wanted to get your take on recruiting around the conference at large with five teams in the top 8. You guys are No. 2. What's it like out there on the recruiting trail, getting top prospects yourself but also seeing that you're going to be playing against a lot of these other McDonald's All-Americans, as well?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, I think it's great. I think it obviously shows that the recruits are really smart because if I was in high school, I would want to play in the Pac-12. Great coaching in this league, a conference that really cares about women's basketball, and it just makes -- you know, a rising tide lifts all ships, right? I think it's -- they want to play against the best, so that's why they're coming out here.

The honest truth is I don't really pay attention to recruiting ranks or where a team is ranked or anything like that, because in the end that doesn't really matter all that much. But I think it goes to show that we have a good product here, and I hope that trend continues.

**Q. Kelly, what do you need from Sedona this year?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, she's one of the most gifted athletes, especially with her size, the unbelievable gifts she has, her talents, her skills. Really has a head for the game. She's a difference maker. She truly is.

**Q. Just being healthy at this stage of the year and not worrying about what you had to worry about for those early months of the season last year, and Kelly, how that changes your approach as a staff with healthy players that need to be healthy for you guys to make a run.**

ENDYIA ROGERS: I think us being healthy helps build our chemistry that we can continue to build on throughout the year. It's very important because when you have people in and out. It's hard to get a rhythm.

But I think it's helping our chemistry, and we'll keep building on it throughout the year.

TE-HINA PAOPOA: It's also a very long season, so the coaches help us have those type of workouts that are not very grueling on our bodies, so it's a long season, and you've just got to stay healthy to have a great team.

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, I think it's one of the reasons we didn't -- we struggled at times last year. We never really got into a rhythm like most people did. You're looking at two of the best guards in the country right here and neither of them played until Pac-12 play. We just didn't have that time to gel.

Obviously health is an important issue everywhere, and so far, so good. Just knock on wood, we want to stay healthy.

**Q. You lost a lot of players who maybe weren't stars but did a lot of those little things that maybe don't show up in the box score. How difficult is it going to be to replace them, and who do you think can do some of those little things that Kylee and Maddie and Sydney did that you don't have anymore?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, every year you lose good players, especially when you're an elite program, and I would put us in elite category. I think we're one of the six or seven programs in the country who have been ranked early for six or seven straight years. We'd put ourselves in that category.

The bad news is yeah, we're going to lose good players. The good news is we have good players behind them or coming in.

We're excited about the group we have. I think right now I'm more excited about this team than I have been in a couple of years. Obviously it's headlined by these two. These two are the ones that have to stir the drink for us.

But we've got a bunch of other good players. Taya Hanson is one of those players that can come in and do all those little things. This is her fifth year in the Pac-12. She's played at a high level. She's played in a program that has had a lot of success and where they breed toughness down there, and she's bringing that to us and we needed it.

Then I look at a really talented freshman class that somebody had already mentioned as well as like an elite hearse. There's somebody that's an elite defender also in her fifth year.

We I think really have all the necessary ingredients that it takes to have a successful year. Now we've just got to go out and do it.

**Q. Kelly, with the way that this conference kind of has an inflection point coming in 2024, obviously USC and UCLA are going to leave. That's when a new media deal is going to happen. Obviously at the NCAA level there will be a new media deal for potentially women's basketball itself. Does it feel like this is a moment for the conference to capitalize on its own women's basketball momentum that's obviously happening across the sport at large, too?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, that's a great point. I think the next couple years are really important for a lot of different reasons that you just talked about. We don't want the attention being on those teams that are leaving, but more on the teams that are still here.

Obviously the media rights.

But we've been the best conference in the country over the last half a decade, and I don't think that's going to change, quite frankly. I think we've put ourselves into a position where we can have continuing growth and success.

But yeah, I think there is -- not pressure, but I think it is important that we put our best foot forward. We do have another outstanding season as a conference.

**Q. There are 10 inter-conference transfers this year, transfers that can be transferred from one Pac-12 team to another. What do you make of that for relationships between coaches and teams and rivalries to have so many players moving within the conference?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, we've become the pros, right? That's what they do in the NBA. They go from team to team. We're always seeing that. I've always been a proponent of freedom of movement. It's interesting now to see the dynamic of inter-conference transfers. I don't know how that'll play out. We were the beneficiary and we also lost one in that scenario.

I think it's okay. Yeah, I don't think -- just because somebody is coming back to play their former team, they're not going to play as hard or whatever. That's just the new way of doing business. I think we just have to accept it and move on from it.

**Q. Given that you didn't have a chance to play all season and your elite status, what have you done in the off-season or over the summer to improve your game? What is your focus to help contribute to the team this season?**

ENDYIA ROGERS: I would say my biggest focus was leadership over the off-season. I feel like in order for others to do their job, I had to do my job and make sure and help them do their job. I think we worked really hard as a group this summer. There was only five of us, so we really came together. And we mean business. We want to win.

Yeah, I think we really came together. Last year we had a disappointing loss, so I think this off-season was like we are ready to redeem ourselves already.

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Speaking off that, a lot of the off-season I worked on my body. Nutrition-wise I learned a lot, that you have to listen to your body and take care of it, and to stay healthy. That was my main priority this year, to stay healthy. I haven't had a full season yet. It was really just working on my body physically, nutritionally, emotionally, and it was a lot of soul and team searching this summer, so I'm excited for you guys to watch us this year.

**Q. Kelly, maybe a quick thought on the incoming freshmen. You've got a good group coming in. Are there one, two, three, four we should keep an eye on?**

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, one, two, three, four, we have four of them. All four of them -- we only carry 11 on our roster, which I think is a good thing. I think all four are going to contribute in different ways.

Chance Gray is an elite guard. Don't you guys think? She is really, really good. I think people are going to love watching her. She plays with a lot of passion, a really high IQ, and she's super skilled.

I think Grace VanSlooten has a chance to be a real star for us; hard worker, multitalented. She played inside and outside. She's got a little bit of old school back-to-the-basket in her game, but she's also the kind of player that can get a rebound and take it coast to coast and make a good decision in a scoring area.

Add on top of her, Kennedy Basham, 6'7", 6'8". She's going to be 6'8" the whole game and I think she has a chance to be a factor defensively. I really do. She didn't play her senior year in high school, so it's been a while since she's really had full-contact competition.

And then Jenna Isai, one of the best players to ever play in the state of Arizona. She's just kind of one of those jack-of-all-trades. We've done well with those type of players. Erin Boley kind of fit that mold a little bit for us.

Yeah, we expect all four freshmen to really come in and contribute. We need them, and I think they're capable.

**Q. For the players, what was it like to have Sabrina Ionescu on campus for College Gameday, and what did her rock star quality infuse into you guys to show you what's possible? Because hand to God, had COVID not stopped everything that year, Oregon was going to be the national champion.**

ENDYIA ROGERS: It was a great experience. We were actually down on the field with her when she had her little pregame interview. She's really nice. She had a camp that weekend, as well, so we went and said hi.

But I can say one thing that she told me to do was always keep up with the score. Know the score in my head, because I don't pay attention.

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Sabrina is a really great model, great person to be around, especially in Eugene. She just kept getting asked to take pictures, autographs, and just seeing those fans adore her was an amazing experience, a blessing to watch.

For her to be there for College Gameday was really crazy,

because I know a lot of fans woke up really early to go see her and the whole thing go down.

Just being around her and taking her advice, she's a great model and a great person to have in our life and Oregon culture.

KELLY GRAVES: Honestly, I screwed up on a question earlier in another area. They asked me what superhero I would be. If I had to answer that question again, I'd say Sabrina, because she truly is a superhero. The example that she has set for our current team as well as the standard she set for all student-athletes, she's changing the game. She's changing the way the game is viewed. It's a lot more mainstream. She has that crossover appeal.

For her to represent the University of Oregon the way she does and with so much passion and love, and the way she represents really the WNBA and everything she's about, she truly is a marvel.

It was pretty neat that we all got a chance to watch it firsthand for four years.

**Q. You guys in your standards struggled; you guys had some injuries last year. What is different about your team and what's going to make it -- you've had high standards. You're talking about Sabrina, maybe the best guard to play in this generation. Maybe, point guard. You're in your shoes. What's going to make this team right now and your leadership you've worked on, Endyia, make this team special for this year?**

ENDYIA ROGERS: I think that like we have a group that's very receptive to what's being asked of them and that are willing to work hard for one another. I could look to my left and I could look to my right, and I'd know that person is going to do their job. We trust each other. We just want to work hard for each other.

Like regardless of the outcome, as long as we work hard, we've done our job. Of course we want to win, but I think we're all in it together, and as of right now we're all healthy.

Again, we're building that chemistry, and we'll continue to grow throughout the year.

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Also I think another point to that is being consistent this year. I think a lot of games last year we didn't know what type of game we were going to have based on our body language and attitude towards the game.

So I think this year we're going to have to be way more consistent, and the coaches are going to have to trust us

and believe that every game we're going to bring our best efforts and attitudes and control what we can control as a team and just trust each other, like Endyia said.

**Q. So your culture is better than it was? I don't want to -- you guys feel better? It's still October, but you know if you feel it, and you just said people to your right and left, you trust them that they're going to do what they're supposed to do.**

ENDYIA ROGERS: Yes, I feel like our culture is very good this year. Again, we like to work hard for one another, and that's all you can ask. If you give your best effort, you can't ask for much more.

KELLY GRAVES: They nailed it. There's a really good vibe around this team. I like it.

**Q. What's going to be better this year, Kelly?**

KELLY GRAVES: Well, I think Te-Hina talked about it, our consistency. We've got to shoot the ball better. I don't think we from the perimeter last year really shot lights out. I think we have more of a capability to do that this year, and then I think just kind of get back for those that have kind of watched us over the last -- well, since we've been at Oregon, since a little bit better offensive fluidity and execution.

I think we've kind of let that go the last couple years. We just haven't been quite as crisp and sharp, and it's something that we're really working on this year, and I really like what I see so far.

We do have a multiple number of play makers which makes a difference. We don't have to create shots necessarily from an offense. We actually have some players that I think can really create on their own, not only plays for themselves but plays for others.

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