

Pac-12 Conference Basketball Media Day

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Commissioner

Commissioner George

Kliavkoff

Deputy Commissioner

Jamie Zaninovich

Commissioner Press Conference

JESSE HOOKER: We're going to welcome commissioner George Kliavkoff to the stage for his opening remarks.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Thank you, Jesse. Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the 2022 Pac-12 men's basketball media day.

I'd like to first thank our student-athletes and our coaches for being with us today. I'd also like to thank our immediate partners and our sponsors and of course everybody in the press who does such an excellent job of telling the stories of our Pac-12 student-athletes and coaches and programs.

I hope this day gives you an opportunity to learn more about our student-athletes and to tell our fans across the country and around the world about these incredible young men.

In a few minutes, Jamie Zaninovich, our deputy commissioner and head of men's basketball, will talk more about the season and future of Pac-12 men's basketball.

As a conference, I think everyone knows our goals are to remain the same. Our goals are to optimize for National Championships and for NCAA Tournament bids.

I've had the opportunity over the past 15 months to get to know many of our men's basketball players. I can tell you that these are talented athletes, dedicated leaders, and most importantly, incredible people. We're so proud to have them play in the Pac-12.

I've also gotten to know our men's basketball coaches, and they play such an essential role in mentoring and providing leadership. We seek to fulfill together our collective



mission, not just of growing great athletes, but growing future leaders.

Just the leadership that our coaches give to these young men, both on the court and off the court, is part of what makes the Pac-12 so special.

Yesterday I touched on several of the major issues that are facing college athletics and the Pac-12 specifically, and I'd be happy when we get to the Q&A to talk about those issues, but we're going to focus first on Pac-12 men's basketball.

Before I hand it over, I want to just once again thank our coaches and our student-athletes and all of you in the press for being here today. I'll ask Jamie to come up and talk a little bit about men's basketball and we'll regroup for Q&A. So Jamie Zaninovich.

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: Good morning, everybody. I have never been so happy to see so many familiar faces involved with Pac-12 men's basketball. It's going to be a great season, and I'd like to second George's thank yous to everyone here -- media, student-athletes, coaches, partners. You are all so important to what we do to helping tell the story of our great student-athletes and coaches. So thank you.

It's always an honor for us to have the student-athletes here of course, and we're also proud that the work we do here hopefully provides them a platform to tell their stories. For those of you -- I don't know if it's posted yet, but those of you who haven't seen Kerr Kriisa's recent interview of Bill Walton that happened in the hall 30 minutes ago, I encourage you to get that from social media.

I'm not sure who was interviewing whom, but it was certainly compelling. Hopefully, we can get more good stories like that out of today's session.

My role, as George mentioned, is to go into a bit more detail about the season and our optimism headed towards the season. First of all, let's talk some sort of fun facts. We're very optimistic about the season. We're coming off a season in the Pac-12 where we had a record six teams



with 20 wins; that's the sixth time in the last ten years that's occurred. So very, very optimistic going into this year.

We obviously also had three teams make the NCAA Tournament. We aspire for more than that, but we had very highly seeded teams last year. Obviously a 1 seed in Arizona, UCLA a 4 seed, and USC a 7 seed. I think we're fairly confident that, if we didn't have nine non-conference games that we missed last year because of our COVID challenges, including two games against two national title contenders, Kansas and North Carolina, both of which were in our Pac-12 footprint, that we would have improved our selection and potentially seeding. But we obviously unfortunately, due to the pandemic, lost those opportunities.

We had three teams ranked in the AP top 25 for all 18 weeks of the regular season, and in January for the first time in 74 years, we had three teams ranked in the top six.

So obviously we're very proud not only of the strength of the top of our conference but also the depth.

A few data points to demonstrate sort of our goal of maximizing both NCAA selections, as George mentioned, as well as National Championships. I think it's important to understand the profile of the league.

First of all -- and I thank Jesse Hooker for some of these notes -- 11 of our 12 schools have competed in a Final Four in our history, which is pretty remarkable, and 8 of our 12 schools have competed in the NCAA Tournament since 2019, which is the last year before the pandemic.

That's two-thirds. And 11 of 12 have competed in the NCAA Tournament since 2014, in the last eight years.

So as you can see, we've had a number of teams access the tournament, and we think once we access the tournament we do fairly well, evidenced by 2021, where I think the Pac-12 was the story of the NCAA Tournament when we had four teams into the Sweet 16.

That success obviously starts with great talent and great coaching, so let's talk a little bit about that. Obviously being old in college basketball is important now, if you look at teams that are succeeding. So having 13 returning all-conference players will be very important to our season this year. We've also been recognized with three teams in the top 25, actually three teams in the top 21. That ties us for third in terms of the most top 25 teams of all conferences.

Our NBA success has been significant. We've produced 78 total NBA Draft selections, including 44 first round

selections in what is the Pac-12 era. That puts us, again, top three of conferences.

We also have one alum from each of our schools on an NBA roster, and we average nearly six per school in the NBA, which is tops among all conferences.

And one last fun fact: We have four head coaches that are Pac-12 alums in the NBA, and that's the most of any conference. So we are well represented at the highest level of basketball.

We're also acquiring great new talent. Recruiting obviously is the life blood of college basketball. In 2022 we'll welcome four McDonald's All-Americans, 7 of the top 50 ESPN nationally recruited players. Both of those also put us in the top three of conferences.

Lastly, we are a global conference, and our student-athletes are performing internationally. This summer alone we had 27 current and former Pac-12 student-athletes representing 19 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas all compete in FIBA competition, including the World Cup qualifiers, EuroBasket '22, America Cup, the European Championship, and then the U18 FIBA Americas Cup, which the USA team there was coached by Coach Tad Boyle at Colorado and came back with a gold medal. I know Tad will be very annoyed if you talk to him about it because he doesn't like talking about himself, but ask him anyway.

Obviously our coaching talent we're very proud of. Not only Tad, but our whole roster. Some great data points here. Our head coaches have combined for nearly 3,200 victories and 20 wins per season with 57 NCAA Tournament appearances, and 160 years of Division I head coaching experience.

So we've great leadership on our sidelines and leadership of our young student-athletes.

Ironically, our newest head coach, Coach Tommy Lloyd of Arizona, set the Pac-12 record and was one win shy of the NCAA all-time mark as a first-year coach with 33 wins last year, and became our league's first AP National Coach of the Year since 2017.

All of our coaches, all of our current Pac-12 coaches have guided their programs to postseason play, 11 of those to NCAA Tournament berths, four Elite Eights, and two Final Fours.

As you can tell, we feel really good about our student-athletes, student-athlete pipeline, coaches, and



those same coaches and our athletic directors and administrators also have worked alongside the conference in the past couple of years.

I think some of you are familiar with on some very important strategic initiatives. Want to highlight some of those now.

George mentioned this earlier on the ESPN show, but we transitioned to our 20-game league schedule in 2020-2021. We feel that's been very successful. It's allowed us to really bring some of our conference games earlier in the season into that one week in early December.

I think it's given us much more relevance, better games, and we've gotten great pickup from our media partners, ESPN, Fox and ESPN on those games as well.

We launched the Pac-12 Coast-to-Coast Challenge. Last year we were able to pull it off in the middle of COVID. In Las Vegas this year we'll really create a first-of-its kind quadruple header, two men's and two women's games in American Airlines Arena in Dallas.

All four games will be broadcast on ESPN networks, and all four games will actually be against Big 12 opponents. That is a Pac-12 branded event. We're very excited about it, and the goal there is to make sure we get our teams quality opponents in great markets outside of our region frankly to showcase Pac-12 basketball.

We also employed our nonconference scheduling standards a few months ago. I won't go into great detail, but these are collective commitments of the schools to increase our strength of schedules, to avoid playing games that don't afford us as much benefit for NCAA selection and seeding, which is our goal.

Lastly, I just want to recognize our partnership with the Golden State Warriors. For the first time since 1939 we're hosting an NCAA basketball tournament event, a regional at Chase Center in March. It was incredibly successful, packed houses. Hopefully, I think some of you were there.

We'll be hosting again with the Warriors, who will be great partners in 2025.

Turning back to the season, a couple other key points. We'll celebrate the 25th men's basketball tournament this year in Las Vegas. Not all of them in Las Vegas, but it is our 25th tournament, so we're very excited about that anniversary.

We're coming off obviously a great showcase in Las Vegas last March with two top teams, Arizona and UCLA, playing

in our championship game. Record rating on Fox. That was actually the highest-rated college basketball Pac-12 men's basketball game ever on Fox, seen by nearly 1.5 million people.

And for those of you that don't know, and I know Heather Vaughn and Tyler would want me to say this: We did go on sale for tickets for the tournament yesterday, and good seats are going fast. Let people know that Pac12.org is your destination for men's basketball tournaments.

We also have great media partners. I referenced them earlier, but we will once again have great exposure for our games this year. More than 215 men's basketball contests will be broadcast across ESPN, including our championship game, Fox, CBS, ABC, and Pac-12 networks, which will feature 146 games supplemented by some great studio content, thanks to many of you in this room.

Our nonconference slate is also very strong. We have 24 home games against postseason teams, 12 home games against NCAA Tournament teams, 29 road and neutral games, which are so important to build our resumes against postseason teams, and three true road games against NCAA Tournament teams.

So as you can see, our programs continue to challenge themselves.

Finally, one of the true highlights of the upcoming season, I think for all of us, including me, is the inaugural edition of the Pac-12/SWAC Legacy Series. A year ago we stood at this podium and announced the first-time partnership between a Power 5 Conference and HBCU, the goal of which is not only creating a forum for basketball competition, but more importantly creating meaningful educational opportunities for our coaches, student-athletes, administrators in the existentially important area of social justice, which has become and still today so important for all of us.

With the game's events starting in merely a few weeks -- I believe November 7th is the first game, Oregon hosts A&M at home on all Pac-12 networks. We're very, very excited to get this started, and we're even more excited because a few weeks ago we were able to secure a partnership with Bryan Stevenson, who leads the Equal Justice Initiative and the Legacy Museum, an icon in this category in our country to actually co-sponsor the event, which is why we've titled it now the SWAC -- Pac-12/SWAC Legacy Series.

Bryan is going to be personally involved with the education programs they do, and we couldn't be more excited about

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

that. I'd also like to call out that that relationship came about as part of an incredible trip that Teresa Gould, one of our colleagues, deputy commissioner here at the Pac-12, led to Selma, Montgomery, Alabama, to 50-plus of our college coaches, student-athletes, and administrators this summer, a life-altering experience described by those who attended, including a handful of our men's and women's basketball players to attend the Legacy Museum and did a march across the Selma Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and jump started our relationship with the Equal Justice Initiative and has allowed us to secure this partnership.

As you can tell, I'm passionate about this. Couldn't be more excited about the possibility to use the game of basketball to create positive social change, which I think we in college athletics are all about.

With that, we're looking forward to an exciting season. Hopefully I didn't deluge people with too many numbers. I'll invite George back up to the podium, and we'll do some Q&A. Thank you.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I just want to say, for those of you who were here yesterday and saw Teresa Gould and kind of the dream team of women's basketball we put together at the Pac-12, and you just heard Jamie and his staff, it's incredible.

Pac-12 basketball is in really good hands both on the men's side and the women's side. I get to work with some amazing colleagues who are driving our conference forward in basketball on both sides. So thank you.

Q. I apologize for starting with a nonbasketball question, but for George, you wrote in your recent letter to the UC regents that UCLA's move to the Big Ten would be a financial loser. Do you have the numbers to back that up?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Yes, some of them are actually in the letter. That letter was written at the request of the regents. We wrote it. We did not leak it. Someone leaked it.

But we believe between the travel and the coaches' salaries and some of the other expenses you incur when you join the Big Ten, the small delta in the media rights deal will be more than offset.

We stand by those numbers. Some of them are in there. Obviously we didn't provide all of our homework, but the regents know the numbers.

Q. Could you give us some of those numbers?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: You could read the letter.

Q. How many UCLA coaches and athletes have you spoken with to assess their thoughts on the move to the Big Ten?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I think saying hundreds would be an exaggeration; dozens, more than a hundred. And I have yet to talk to anyone in the UCLA and USC community who's in favor of the move.

I will say that I probably hear from folks who are not in favor, not surprisingly.

Q. Lastly, even if the letter was successful and UCLA's move was blocked, how would you expect to move forward in a cooperative manner with UCLA given that you just thwarted its wishes?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: We're not thwarting anyone's wishes. It's not our choice. It's up to the regents, and we're just providing information as requested.

Q. George, how do you respond when people ask how does this league get stronger losing two members like UCLA and USC?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I think it's a couple of things. I think, first, we're going to do a media rights deal here in the near future, which will close the gap between us and the Big Ten and the SEC. That's a first step. Eventually we'll catch those guys. It will take a couple of steps, but we're going to take a step towards closing that gap.

Then we're going to be looking at expansion. We're going to be looking at schools that make sense for us.

Q. I spoke with the Big 12 commissioner, and they spoke about adding a fourth time zone, suggesting they want to go west. Could you give me an idea where some of that expansion could come from for the Pac-12?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: We're not going to talk about specific candidates for expansion. I'm not going to get ahead of my board on that. Thank you for the opportunity, though.

Q. Jamie, I was wondering if you could kind of expound a little more on the Legacy Series and the importance of it in your eyes and what do you hope is accomplished through these games?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: It's really a testament to our athletic directors and coaches. The story of the Legacy Series was

post the George Floyd tragedy we sat as a membership and really discussed what can we do that's meaningful? I think a lot of folks noticed neutral-site opportunities for HBCUs, mission statements, and we came up with the idea of what if we went to their campuses?

For those of you that are familiar with HBCUs and men's basketball -- and I have a little bit of experience from my men's basketball committee days -- is they rarely have home games. These teams are very under-resourced, and they're forced to basically go on the road constantly. As a result, it becomes very difficult for them even if they have a talented team to get selected to the NCAA Tournament.

So we thought it would be meaningful if we offered to do a true sort of series, like other Power 5 leagues have done, but actually play road games. Again, it's about much more than the men's basketball competition. I think the vision of our athletic directors and our coaches is also to sort of educate both ways, to open the eyes of our players to the importance of HBCUs in this country, both historically and in the future, and the other way around.

So we're working on -- with the Equal Justice Initiative and Bryan Stevenson's Legacy Museum team, we're working on a whole toolkit of educational initiatives. I know Colorado, Arizona, others that are in the first cycle of these games, already have really pretty incredible plans in the educational space, so I would encourage you to ask their coaches about that.

And that's really going to be the most meaningful part of it is for these kids, as part of their education, to open their eyes to a whole different experience they wouldn't have had.

And as part of developing themselves as leaders in the future, to carry that forth and have that knowledge as part of their experience as a college student-athlete.

Q. Jamie and George, I just want to commend you guys. Man, I've been talking to Jamie a lot. I'm a kid that grew up in Louisiana. Almost everybody that I grew up went to a SWAC school, either Southern or Grambling, so I'm really excited about the partnership. Just the fact that most of those people are fans of the Arizonas, the UCLAs, but can only watch them on TV, for Arizona to go down to -- and go down to Grambling, that's huge. Have we finalized anything that's going to take place with the social justice part? I know the basketball game is going to be great, but I think the flip side, that part of it, education, and especially for our Pac-12 student-athletes is going to be really, really important.

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: So I don't have all the details because I haven't memorized the toolkit, but we have a full toolkit for each of the schools that the Legacy Museum and EJI are helping us with of sort of different opportunities for them.

I know, for example, Colorado is going to one of the museums in the Grambling area. They're meeting with the president of the university as I understand it the night before the game. Tad Boyle would have more of those details. But each of the schools is committed to doing that both on the home and away side to make sure that it's more than just a basketball game.

Part of our athletic director's goal with the coaches is to make these meaningful connections too, to make sure we can create relationships with those schools that have not existed before because we haven't gone in depth with the competitions as we will with this.

Q. I just want to commend you guys again. I think it's fantastic.

George, earlier this year you weren't real happy with what was going on with NIL and the way it was being used as an inducement to recruiting, and you said you were going to do some work on that. Anything you can update us on that at all?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Yeah, I'm still not happy with it being used for inducement or paying kids to go to a particular school. I think the solution is federal legislation so we have a single set of rules that are equally enforced across the entire country as opposed to a patchwork of some state laws and lots of states with no laws.

I'm optimistic about our opportunity to get that accomplished after the midterm election.

Q. Has there been any movement on that at all, or is it just kind of on hold?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: There has been movement. There's been new bills introduced, and they tend to lean towards what I think the NCAA would be able to support and our members as well.

Q. Where will we be next year for the Pac-12 media days?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: We haven't announced where we're holding the media days yet, but this will be the last time in this facility. Our lease ends here in about nine months, and we're not renewing the lease.

Q. I guess to either of you, I thought last year we didn't even have to ask this question, but it turned out we probably needed to, but what if COVID flares up again? Any differences in the protocols if this happens again next season?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: We obviously still have our Pac-12 medical advisory group active, with Maggy Carlyle, our Pac-12 liaison meeting with that group regularly. We'll go back to our pre-COVID rules on scheduling, rescheduling, and anything.

If we have to adjust, knock on wood, hopefully we don't. If we have to adjust, we will like we did last year, but we're very confident we won't have to and we can go back to sort of what this looked like in 2019.

Q. Martin Jarmond was replaced as the Pac-12 representative on the NCAA Tournament selection committee. I think you might realize how that looks in the wake of the move to the Big Ten. Can you talk about why that move was made?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: Yeah, it's a standard structure. We have a number of ADs. I was on the men's basketball committee as well. Andy Katz is here. In his work he knows a lot about the basketball -- it's actually standard -- when a school announces their departure from a conference, basically it's standard that the conference replaces a representative with a core member who has not announced their departure basically because it's perceived as a conflict of interest in the room.

That's happened any number of times throughout the history of the basketball committee. In fact, it just happened on the women's side. Lisa Peterson, our new senior associate commissioner, will be the chair because of another departure on the women's side. It's pretty standard.

Q. Can you tell me why the conference did not inform him directly? He had to learn from Dan Gavitt.

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: I did inform him directly. I called him myself.

Q. He said he learned from Dan Gavitt, but --

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: Okay.

Q. Jamie, just to follow up -- and, again, this is theoretical -- but I think last year part of the issue from what I heard is some states and schools were required to randomly test and others weren't, and that maybe even resulted in a competitive advantage. Has there

been any conversation about if that happens again?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: I'm not probably the right one to talk about specific medical protocols. We can get you some time with Maggy Carlyle, who's our medical liaison on that, but we don't anticipate the same challenges this year.

Q. If I could ask on a different note, you're talking about the 20 games and in December, obviously this could change. But if you had only ten schools in 2024/25, would you move it back to a traditional round robin starting New Year's, or could you kick a couple of those games back in December? What might happen?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: We're trying to avoid a lot of scenario planning right now until we have a certainty of what our membership will be in 2024. We have a couple of years to figure that out. We talked with our coaches in May about putting together an ad hoc scheduling committee, something we did three or four years ago that came up with the 20-game schedule, to look at a number of things.

Look at our nonconference scheduling standards, look at our nonconference schedule, look at the events that we want to support. We're going to activate that again, but we want to give it a little bit of time, because as George mentioned, if we do have membership changes, doesn't make sense to make changes for something that's a hypothetical in the future. We have time to make those adjustments.

Q. George, what does a potential new member of the Pac-12 have to have for you to be interested?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: We have a series of criteria related to market size, athletic performance, academic criteria, cultural fit, all of those. We have the opportunity to look at different scenarios where those are weighted differently, and the board will direct us about how to weight the potential opportunities.

I will tell you, I continue to be surprised by all of the schools that are reaching out to us and want to be part of that consideration set. I'm very enthusiastic about the opportunities that are in front of us, and we'll let the board guide us in those decisions.

Q. Two-part question. When it comes to optimizing bids for the league, something I look at very closely, has there been advanced discussions? I know there's only five other leagues that are at the Power level to do a full-on challenge with not just -- the coast to coast is a nice couple of opportunities there. Is there advanced discussions to get in maybe with the Big East, who

only has one right now, or a league like that, maybe the ACC? Second part is is there also conversation to do that in late January so that way, if you're a team like Oregon or Washington State last year, where they took a couple bumps early on, they have another nonconference primetime game later in the season. Any thoughts on that?

JAMIE ZANINOVICH: Yeah, so we've had a lot of discussion about all those things as part of the strategic planning process and have reached out to a number of those conferences. As you know, a number of them are already locked up on their challenges. I think there could be some movement with that, specifically if you look at the ACC-Big Ten challenge for example, the fact that the TV partners have shifted there. We're not sure what's going to shake out with that. Big East, there could be some movement there as well.

We'll continue to have those conversations. We're far. When you talk about full challenges, sometimes it's hard to get these conferences to commit. That's one reason why the Coast-to-Coast Challenge was something we came up with to do at a neutral site, to go to sort of outside markets and to get a few of our teams at least these opportunities.

We're active on these other -- even if they're not branded, we're active with these promoters and partners, specifically for events in the west. That's a priority of ours. We'd like to see them operate more in the west so we could have more events in our region rather than our schools always having to go out of region for those important neutral site games.

Q. At the Pac-12 football media day, a lot of the conversation was about the transfer portal and USC getting so many guys in and loading up, UCLA. I don't necessarily see that on the men's basketball side. Why do you think we haven't seen the transfer portal explode and free agency come to basketball in that way?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: I think it has to do with playing minutes, candidly. The fact that in basketball you can distribute those minutes more easily than you can in plays in football. If you're the second quarterback on a team, you're not playing the whole game, where if you're the second point guard, you're getting in. That's my impression.

Q. George, getting back to the media rights, you said deal shortly. Like end of the day, end of the month, end of the year? Can you give us a little bit clearer picture?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Somewhere in that range. No news today.

Q. Would you anticipate the media rights deal involving a streaming service at some point?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Well, almost all of the existing media companies have streaming services that they're trying to promote. So streaming will be part of the deal, whether it's from a traditional linear network that has streaming services or whether it's a new streaming service, don't know, can't tell you. All of those bidders are in front of us, and we're looking at all those opportunities.

But I don't see any scenario where we don't end up streaming some of our games.

Q. And just one more. You said it's going to take a couple of steps to get you on the same footing with the SEC and the Big Ten. Being that it's going to take a couple of steps, would that indicate that you're more open to a shorter term contract to get you to that point?

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: Yeah, I don't think it's appropriate to go into any of the specifics of the media rights deals, including the length of the deal. But thank you for the question.

JESSE HOOKER: Thanks for the questions for Jamie and George. I know that we have a special presentation with the commissioner. So we'll take the podium back up front, and George will present.

GEORGE KLIAVKOFF: As Jesse mentioned, we have a special presentation. In May the Stanford women's golf team won the Pac-12's 200th NCAA Women's Championship, far ahead of the next closest conference and an incredible milestone for the Pac-12.

The victory continues to be a testament to our schools' ongoing investment and commitment to excellence in women's sports. It's also a fitting milestone to have that achieved during the 50th anniversary of Title IX.

I'd like to invite to the stage Stanford women's head coach Anne Walker to join me.

(Applause.)

Well deserved. And on behalf of the Pac-12, I'd like to present you with the trophy.

Thank you all.

