

Pac-12 Conference Football Media Day

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Oregon Ducks Coach Dan Lanning Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined by Dan Lanning, head coach at Oregon.

Let's talk about your team. How have you grown this program philosophically from year one to here we are entering year two?

DAN LANNING: We've done a couple studies. We recently finished up doing a SWOT analysis of our team. You get to peel back the layers, ask our guys what are our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. I thought our guys did a really good job of breaking that down, figuring out what we can lean into, what we have to improve on, what can get in the way of our success. It's been fun.

Q. How did those guys receive that from you? What stood out from that analysis?

DAN LANNING: Big piece is we've talked about Oregon for a long time being a really good program. We studied a little bit this off-season the book, Jim Collins, "Good to Great." We want to make those steps. What does that look like?

I think part of that is ownership and accountability within our team. Our players have really embraced that. They've done a good job of sometimes not always fun to hear what you're not good at, to figure out what you need to get better at. I think our guys have done a really good job of attacking that.

Q. Speaking with Jeff earlier, he talked about how it was a big honor to be here. Why was he the right choice?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, Jeff is just a great example of a guy that's put in the hard work. He made a position change early on in college, and now begun through the process of changing himself, his body. Really become a student of the game. He's a guy that lives by example

every single day. He exudes some of the attributes we want our players to have.

Q. You said last season pass-rush needed to get better. You said that spring season. Now that you've evaluated spring ball, why do you feel your group is better at that area?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think we have better depth, better understanding of what we're trying to accomplish. We have done a good job in recruiting, bringing some great talent in that can make us better there.

Q. You're really big every week on talking to your players about going to the doctor, getting a prescription, putting it into execution. For Dan Lanning, looking back over year one, what did the doctor say over the off-season?

DAN LANNING: I'm not going to give you all the secrets of the trade. I got a lot to improve on, just like everybody on the team. Just like that SWOT analysis, what are your strengths and weaknesses, and are you willing to hear them?

We leaned into recently some of the principles that were written down in 1977 by Rob Strasser for Nike. Those 10 principles, a lot of those hold true today. Our business has changed is one of those big principles. We have to be willing to adapt in a world of college football where everything changes.

We talked about living off the land. We have great resources at Oregon. We shared a story of Mariano Rivera as a kid used a cardboard glove. Wasn't worried at looking at someone else's plate, he was focused on what he needed to do to get better.

That's the same thing I try to do. That's certainly what our players are trying to do in our program right now.

Q. A question for you, Kirby Smart and Georgia is the archetype, you had a big part in that. Do you have conversations with Kirby in the off-season? Have you given any advice or had conversations with Kenny

Dillingham, the Arizona State new head coach?

DAN LANNING: As a head coach, we don't get a lot of wiggle time to talk to each other. Every time you are talking to each other, you feel like you should be talking to a recruit.

Certainly I get a opportunity to catch up with Coach Smart and have a lot of admiration and respect for the opportunities he created for me. I have that same relationship with Kenny. We're talking more about each other's families than football. He's a great student of the game. He's going to be a phenomenal coach for Arizona State and excited to see what he does there.

Q. Can you talk about the impact that the newcoming students -- that you plan on them making?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I hope a big one. We have over 45 newcomers on scholarship, over 50 players on our team that are new to our roster. You hope they do a great job of transitioning in with the guys we already have here, some great veteran leadership that exists on our team.

One thing that has been great is the opportunities we get to spend together away from football. I think that makes that transition that much smoother for our players.

Recently we were able to do some community service. I'm proud of the fact that we have in the last six months done over 850 hours of community service with 16 different organizations.

I think that's a part of realizing, these guys, what's it mean to be an Oregon Duck. It means doing a little bit more. Those guys, as they transition, getting to be a part of where you build beds for a community or do some of those things, I think that helps with that transition process.

Q. Can you describe the synergy you have with Bo Nix? How did that play into the relationship last year, and how more in sync are you this year?

DAN LANNING: I could tell you what Bo is thinking right now (laughter). No, competing against Bo is where it starts. You see how much of a competitor he is. Getting to go against him, I knew he was a guy I didn't want to face.

Bo is not just our quarterback, he's also my baby-sitter. I walked in the house the other day. My wife was out with some of the other coaches' wives I believe. Bo is in the living room. I'm like, What are you up to? He goes, The boys just finished basketball practice, they're getting ready for bed.

So there's a unique connection there. It's more than just football. He's a member of the family, so...

Q. Obviously there's so much quarterback talent in the Pac-12 this year. From a defensive point of view, how do you approach that?

DAN LANNING: You try to figure out what they do best and stop it. It's certainly exciting times to be in this league. You get to go against great quarterbacks every single week. I think that's part of the challenge that every real competitor enjoys, is getting to go against elite competition.

Q. With the landscape changing in the Pac-12, with USC and UCLA going to the Big Ten, how do you feel that's going to affect the program's recruiting appeal?

DAN LANNING: I'm really focused on Oregon. We've been able to recruit elite talent since I've been here. We'll continue to do that. Our focus is winning games. I'm a true believer if you win games, the rest takes care of itself.

Q. What is Bo Nix' hourly rate for baby-sitting?

DAN LANNING: Man (laughter). He does a lot of things from the goodness of his heart. I hear he can pull top dollar these days.

Q. To have a leader like that, when he decided to come back, how are you feeling about where the offense is?

DAN LANNING: It certainly helps having your quarterback back, right? We were one of the best teams in college football protecting our quarterback last year. A lot of that credit goes to Bo, but a lot of that goes to our offensive line.

We have some of those pieces back. There's going to be a new group in front of them. We have the talent. As we went through our SWOT analysis, one of our weaknesses, we haven't had the same experience on the offensive line this year. How do we create that?

I'm so impressed with the job the offensive line has done in creating that this off-season. The extra work they do after workouts, the time they spend together to create that chemistry that's necessary.

But certainly Bo is a big piece of that. You talk about having weapons outside, a great backfield. I think all those pieces add together to set us up for success.

Q. How is Kenny Dillingham going to do for the Sun Devils? How hard is going to be when you play against him?

DAN LANNING: When you play him, it's like playing your brother. If I was playing my brother in basketball right now, I'd want to whoop his ass. That's the goal. But Kenny is a competitor too. And he's a great coach, and he's familiar with that area. That's home for him. I think he'll do great things for the Sun Devils.

Q. You talk about your offense, you talk about the history of this program. You're always connected to it. Specifically, a little over a year ago you lost Spencer Webb. How have you maintained your relationship to his legacy within the locker room and for you personally?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, there's really not a day that goes by that you don't think about it. Tomorrow we're actually -- we finish every summer workout with the climb up Spencer's Butte. That's going to be a big capstone to our season. Guys will go on that walk that didn't know Spencer, guys that climb the hill that didn't know him personally. A lot of people that were impacted by Spencer every day when we climb that butte.

Something that means a lot to me. Opportunity to express the importance of life, taking advantage of the time while you're here on earth for our guys.

Q. Your philosophy as it relates to the transfer portal. Do you see it as a really helpful tool, using it more than you'd say your competitors are, and how do you see it integrated with high school recruiting?

DAN LANNING: I can't really speak to our competitors. I'll speak to us. If we find somebody that we think will make our program better and they fit the characteristics of what we're looking for for our team, we think they'll be a great teammate, bring us talent, we'll do everything we to make sure they're on our team.

We always recruit high school. Over 29 players coming in as freshmen this year that we're really excited about. The transfer portal is a tool that we want to use, we want to be the best at it.

Q. With the transfer portal, with where college football is, seems like there's never time to take a break. Your core DNA trait is connection. How do you make sure that is a point of emphasis with all the responsibilities, requests that go your way?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, you got to remember what's the most important piece. For us, that is the most important piece. That's the secret sauce for us. On fourth down, you're going to go that much harder when you care about

the guy next to you.

It's just as important for our coaches and our families. We just got off some vacation time. But I'm sure Sauphia is ready for me to go back to work right now. The rules are different when I'm at the house.

We love having the players over at the house. Spending time with them away from football, community service, those things I think are really special for us.

Q. Talking about your family, being a dad, you talk about making time for your kids, what is the key to that?

DAN LANNING: The hardest part isn't time, it's intentional time, right? It's the willingness to say I'm going to put my phone down for a little bit and focus on those guys. We're competitors in our house like we are on the football field. Might be a board game one night, a puzzle, but might be a conversation.

Luckily I'm head coach now, but at home Sauphia is the head coach, right? She kind of runs the show. Just like all of our coaches' wives, they give so much of their time, you want to find the time to be intentional back with your family.

Q. Time in Eugene. The job is all gas, you're rolling. You've had some moments to get in touch with the community. What have you learned about this community that you didn't know a year ago?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, just so welcoming. It's been a place that we really enjoy being a part of. You're looking at being an hour and a half from the coast, hour and 30 minutes from the mountains, getting to experience all the things of Oregon.

And I feel like there's so much I haven't got to see yet. I'm excited to continue to explore the community, explore the state of Oregon. But the people are what make it so special.

Q. A lot of newcomers at linebacker. I'm curious how important Jeff is going to be there and just an overview of that group.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, overall I'm really excited about that group. I think nowadays in college football, at linebacker especially, you have to be really athletic. The day and age of having an old mike linebacker that can go B gap to B gap or C gap to C gap, that's not a reality anymore.

You got to have guys that can run, guys that have blitz ability, can cover. Obviously Jeff fits those traits as a



former safety. You have guys we were able to bring in like Jestin Jacobs, Connor Soelle. They'll add to that. Then you have a guy in Jamal Hill that we moved, as well. Also excited to see some of our young guys develop, Devon Jackson, some of the other guys on our team that have had really good off-seasons.

It's a group that I'm excited about. I think we have some great talent there. We just have to get that experience on the field.

Q. When you talk about that front seven, it's a lot of four-, five-, six-, seven-year guys. What have they done to the 50 new faces that have entered into this program?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, that leadership, it means a little bit more coming from a player than it does a coach. When Casey Rogers has something to say, he's speaking to a freshman, I think they hear the message a little bit better.

One thing you're excited about is when you start to hear your players say the same message they hear from you. They're the ones that live it day to day. I'm going to play zero snaps for Oregon this year, but those guys are going to be playing a lot of snaps. It's important they understand what the goals are of the team. When you have some veteran leadership, that certainly helps.

Q. I always felt that college football writes itself, it's the best drama, unscripted. Tez Johnson comes in as Bo Nix's brother. When he came into Bo's family, his hoodie was an Oregon hoodie. It's been his dream school; now he's there. What have you noticed about him as a wide receiver?

DAN LANNING: He's fast.

No, it's been great having Tez. I think he's been a great complement to that room. He's been integrated into the team really well. It's nice having his big brother on the team. That certainly helps.

Tez works. He's one of those guys, when he steps on the grass, you can tell he loves football. There's a lot of things he wants to get better at, a lot of goals he has set for himself. As long as he keeps that in front of him, what he has to improve, what he has to attack, I think he can be a real asset to our program.

Q. Most of your freshmen last year redshirted. Where are those guys at a year into the program? How much can you lean on those guys to provide more depth?

DAN LANNING: It's been fun this weekend. Really just

being down here, I'm getting some text messages, updates from our strength coach, Coach Love, some of the gains these guys have had this off-season. Guys are going to have an opportunity to impact our program.

Excited to see where those guys come along. If they're good enough, they're old enough. We don't care how old you are, we care about how good you are. We have players that are ready to take some field for us, great depth, and I hope some of those freshmen are a part of that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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