

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Oregon Ducks

Coach Dan Lanning

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Our first coach is Oregon's Dan Lanning. Coach Lanning, welcome to the Big Ten. We'll begin with your opening statement.

DAN LANNING: It's certainly great to be back here in Indianapolis. The last time I was in this stadium, I got to enjoy a National Championship with some of my former players there at Georgia. It's refreshing to be here. 2 1/2 years from that moment, it's been so rewarding to be a part of our program at Oregon, and certainly excited about that.

I want to start by thanking our commissioner, Tony Petitti. I've been so impressed sitting in these Big Ten meetings early as a newcomer, not only with his vision of the conference, but his ability to listen and work with our coaches.

And extremely impressed with the coaches that I get to sit alongside. Every one of us is competitive, but what's impressive about that room is how much they care about people and how much they care about the game, and their leadership certainly shows up in this conference and something we're grateful to be a part of.

I also want to take time to thank Craig Bohl and the job he does with AFCA advocating for our coaches. He's been really instrumental in some of the legislation that's passed that's going to improve our game. Grateful we have a voice there that's listening to us and respects it.

This summer has been absolutely bittersweet for me. I got to spend great time with my family. We went back and spent some time in Missouri. Got to explore a lot of places here on the West Coast, the Pacific Northwest, and it's just absolutely beautiful country. I'm really excited for everybody in the Big Ten, the fans to get to experience some of the beauty that exists here in Oregon. Certainly grateful for that time.

Our three boys right now are back home doing church camp, but my kids are just at that perfect age -- 14, 13, and 11. I wish I could freeze time. Some of you parents out there know how valuable that is. I've got an unbelievable

home. I've got a head coach at home, Sauphia, my wife, who's been the absolute backstop, the root for our family, and made the summer a whole lot of fun for us to spend some time together in fellowship.

I think she's ready to send me back to work, so it's good that football season is here.

These past three days, we just wrapped up a coaches retreat in Central Oregon, another beautiful area. We spent some time going over future opponents, summer scouting, and really leaning in on one of the most important traits in our program, which is connection. Focusing in on the roots of our program, what makes us an elite coaching staff, how we can build our roster, what things are going to be in front of us and our future.

Also just an opportunity to fellowship and spend time together. It's a staff that I really enjoy being a part of. We have some newcomers on our staff. I'm excited to see them grow within our program, but certainly value that time and the beauty of our state over the last few days.

Also this summer, we experienced great sorrow. Losing a player that means so much to us, had finished his career here at Oregon, losing Khyree in a car accident this summer, it hurt. It's one of those things you wake up to as a coach and hope to never see. I'm feeling for him and his family.

I want to give a special thank you to the Minnesota Vikings and the way they've taken care of Khyree and his family, someone we want to support. He's a guy I always tell myself we have to be grateful for the time we got to spend with Khyree, someone who was really tough for our team, and tough to see, a guy with such a bright future and his life being cut short.

This season is a very exciting one for our team. Our players have been working their tails off this summer. Entering this conference, there's some new challenges that are presented. Going through the summer scouting reports, you realize that some of these teams that we are going to get to play, and it's really exciting.



But I'll tell you here at Oregon, we chase and attack those challenges. We're excited about the traditions that exist here in the Big Ten. We're excited about some of the venues that we're going to get the opportunity to play in, but we know that none of that really matters until you start with Game 1.

This off-season we spent some time studying a couple of books that hopefully will give us an edge. We studied "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu. We also studied the book "Hidden Potential" by Adam Grant. Hopefully these books will give us an edge as we attack this future season.

I'm also really proud of the growth our team has had off the field and the impact they've made on their community. Our guys do a lot of projects and community service, working with kids sports, making 230 beds with Sleep in Heavenly Peace for kids that don't have beds, traveling the world, really making an impact. I'm really proud of the community service that our guys do and how they've been able to impact our program and our community because these guys are so much more than just football players.

One of the more enjoyable things for me being at Oregon is my opportunity to connect with some of the other phenomenal coaches at Oregon, whether that's Dana, whether that's Casey Martin, the guys that we have. And it's also been really refreshing to see some of our players get the opportunity to cross over in sports, seeing Bryce Boettcher get to play for Coach Was there, win a Golden Glove in baseball, but still be a great performer for us on the football field. Rod Pleasant run track, that's something I really enjoy.

I think sports at Oregon are in a great place, and that's great credit to our leadership, Rob Mullens, and just the alignment from top to bottom.

I'm excited today to have three phenomenal players here who are here to represent us, and all three have worked extremely hard and are certainly deserving. They put themselves in position to be here. I'll start with Dillon Gabriel, our quarterback. He's part of a great family. Garrett and Dori have done an unbelievable job raising this guy.

I got the opportunity to recruit him a little bit when I was at Georgia before, and getting to reconnect with him, obviously he's a legacy. His dad set a lot of records as a quarterback before, and now Dillon gets an opportunity to carry on that legacy. I know wearing the No. 8 and representing the number that Marcus wore here at Oregon means a lot to him.

What's impressed me the most about Dillon is his ability to

connect, not just in our program, but outside of our program, whether taking an offensive retreat and taking our players to different parts of Oregon to throw the ball around in fellowship, or having the managers over to his house to watch a fight or a meal. He's really done a great job of connecting quickly. I'm excited about the experience he brings to the position, and I know that you guys will enjoy getting to visit with him today.

Also excited to have one of our greats, one of our best players, Terrance Ferguson here, a tight end, a guy that certainly had a decision after the season whether he wanted to return or not or have the opportunity to go into the NFL.

I have to give a little shout out to Terrance. He just was engaged. So he has a fiancée. Certainly excited for him and his future there. The job he has done this off-season, the work that he's put in, the leadership role he provides for that tight end room but for our offense and our team has been amazing.

Those of you who haven't had the opportunity to be around Terrance, one of the things I really love about him, is when we go out to the practice field and his foot steps inside that white line, he's running. He attacks every day with vigor. He's been a great teammate for our team, has done a great job, plays with great passion and energy. Certainly excited about him. His parents have done an unbelievable job and fight for every moment they can to spend around him. Great to have him here.

On the defensive side of the ball, we're able to bring Jeff Bassa here, one of our linebackers that has a little bit of experience with these media days. He was able to travel, this is his last year, to our media day in Las Vegas. His mom, Giselle, is extremely proud of him and the job that he's done.

This guy has grown and grown every single year that I've been here into this leadership role to the point where we now have a coach on the field. If we had to have Jeff call the defense, he can tell you why he's calling it and what he's doing. He's the kind of guy that can run the drills if a coach isn't present. He's a true leader. He wants to attack his game. He doesn't want you to tell him all the things he's great at, he wants to be coached.

He coaches the guys around him. He demands excellence. And I think you'll see that well represented today.

Ultimately, what should the Big Ten know about Oregon? We're mighty different, mighty different in a lot of ways. You look out there in the pond, you'll see a big old duck. I

hope we get to travel that duck to all our away games this year.

We're mighty different when it comes to the jerseys we get to wear or the facilities we're in. We're innovative. We've always been on the cutting edge of everything we do. We certainly positioned ourself to be on the cutting edge, and we're grateful for the opportunity to compete in the Big Ten.

Excited for the opportunity in front of us and excited to see what this team does. It's a brand-new team. It's not the same team as last year. On our team right now are ten players who were on the team when I first got here, so we're talking about a new group. These guys have completely bought in. Excited to perform. I know they're anxious to get on the field, but there's a lot of work between now and then before we do that.

Q. First of all, welcome to the Big Ten. I wanted to ask you just about Dillon Gabriel and how you were able to build and cultivate that relationship between you two that will be able ultimately to translate on the field and accomplish the goals that you all are setting out this season.

DAN LANNING: Yeah, one of our DNA traits is connection. You lean on prior experience. Like I said, Dillon is a guy that I knew before in the recruiting process and got to watch him from a distance. Being from Hawaii, I think it means a lot to him to be able to represent Oregon and our strong history there in the state.

Again, I heard his mom singing karaoke at Georgia a few years ago when we were recruiting him, and now she came out and killed it again here at Oregon. But just an unbelievable family. Spent a lot of time with each other. We got the opportunity to go -- I'm not a good golfer, but Dillon and I got to go play yesterday. We saw Marcus on the golf course, and he's a good competitor.

Those moments, those moments away from football where we get an opportunity to connect, spend some time with each other, and then seeing him carry those same moments over to our players, whether it's going out to dinner with a guy, seeing the way he operates in our locker room. Really has a passion for the game and a passion to do great, and we're excited to have that on our team.

Q. After you left the Pac-12, where do you see the advantages of coming into the Big Ten, not only for the University of Oregon, but for your football team?

DAN LANNING: There's several things. One, having a clear vision of our future. Obviously this is the premier league of college football, and getting to be a part of that,

getting to be a part of some of those storied traditions, play some of the teams that are in our future, I'm really excited about going to some venues we haven't experienced. It also gives us an opportunity. We've always been a team that's recruited nationally, but it's made our footprint stronger in the Midwest.

Whether it's states in this area that we haven't tapped into as much, it gives us an opportunity to recruit those states and give people an opportunity. We've always recruited East Coast to West Coast, but now having the opportunity to have some of those games played in venues that are close to the players we're recruiting certainly helps.

Q. You guys had the tough challenge of replacing Kenny Dillingham last year, but it didn't look so tough with Will Stein coming in. You guys were No. 2 in total offense last year. What makes him a shooting star within the coaching ranks, and how is he meshing with Dillon in the spring and summer portions?

DAN LANNING: I've been so fortunate to have great coaches on our staff. Will would tell you -- one of the things that makes Will so unique is his ability to work with the guys that he has in that room. He would tell you each of those coaches are so valuable to his success.

I think he's adaptable. I think that's the most important trait in college football right now for coaches is their ability to adapt to ever-changing rules, ever-changing schemes. I think he's hungry to learn, has a passion to find information. Doesn't always feel like he has all the answers, but I can tell you Will knows how to solve it.

He has a great group of coaches he gets to work with every day. He does a great job with our players. He connects to them. He can meet them at the surface level. Is a guy that played the quarterback position, I think that's really important, how it translates to his success on the field.

Really excited to see what he does for our program this year.

Q. Coach, you lost four defensive linemen on the interior from last year's team, including Brandon Dorlus. What do you see in that room, and how do you think that depth chart plays out as we head towards the season?

DAN LANNING: I'm really proud of the way our personnel department and coaching staff went and attacked that. We've recruited really well in that area, especially in the high school ranks, and that's where we build our team first. I think we signed 25 high school players this past year, but



that's a position that takes development. You have to get them kind of quick. We were able to bring in some guys in the portal. And then grow the guys on our roster for a really strong two deep that can compete.

A lot of people ask me, what's different about going to the Big Ten? I hear it's a lot more physical.

The reality of winning football when you're a team like Oregon and the position you want to put yourself at the end of the year, you've got to win in the trenches at the end of the year, not just in the middle of the year.

For us to build the team we want, we know that's really important, and that's why we've attacked it so hard.

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