

Big 12 Conference Football Media Days

Monday, July 18, 2016

Bob Bowlsby

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Good morning. I guess summer is officially gone. I'm sure all of us are very pleased about that. Thank you all for coming. I know many of you were camped out in SEC Land last week, and I know this gets to be a little bit of a labor. But we appreciate you being here and we particularly appreciate the relationship we have with so many of you throughout the year. We really do appreciate the coverage. We appreciate you being here for this event. More than that, we really enjoy a good relationship with many of you and some long friendships. So thank you all for being here.

This is my fifth year down the path on this and that really is sort of amazing coming out of my mouth! I guess the one good thing about the fifth year and this year in particular is I probably am not going to have to answer the question about what's going to happen if you get left out of the playoff for another year because we've actually got a track record now. We've been in half the time, and we've got a 13th data point. Last year we got in without the 13th data point and in the future we will have a 13th data point, so it's all good. You can ask that question if you want to. Now I'm not obligated to answer it.

It is a pleasure to welcome Matt Campbell and Jim Grobe to the conference. They are two really, really outstanding football coaches, but more than that, two very outstanding people. I am particularly grateful to Jim for coming into a difficult situation. He is -- and I told Ian McCaw this, he was an inspired choice. There is not a person in all of college football with better experience or better values, and he is every bit the right guy at this time.

You will also get a chance later to hear from Mack Rhoades, but we want to welcome Mack to the league. He comes in with a terrific reputation and a difficult job to do, but he's certainly going to be up to the task.

This has been a very successful year for our conference. We ended up with three national championships. We had six second-place finishes, which frankly was a little bit frustrating, I think, and we ended up with 16 top-four finishes in the NCAA this year. It was a good year! We had 70% of our football teams in Bowl games. We had 70% of our men's basketball teams in the NCAA Tournament. Five of



nine volleyball teams were in the NCAA Tournament including a finalist in the University of Texas. We had four of our seven softball teams in the championship series, including the champion in the University of Oklahoma, and amazingly we had three of the last five teams in the College World Series in baseball. All that's good!

But in all frankness, we haven't won a National Championship in football since '05 and we haven't won one in men's basketball since '08. So we have a lot to aspire to and obviously that's the level at which we start every season. We are all about winning championships, and we think we've got teams that are capable of doing that. As an aside, and you may have seen it in some of our releases, but we will have 87 current or former student-athletes that will be participating in the Olympic Games in Rio. We are very fortunate.

We have had a wide array of top performers that have come through our league and the Big XII will be very well represented. Off the playing surfaces, we've also had a good year. This is the first year we have distributed more than \$30 million per school in distributable revenue. That's going to continue to ramp up over the next eight years as our contract has designated escalator clauses in it. This will also be the first year for TCU and West Virginia to fully participate with equal shares in the revenue distribution. And with the addition of a champ game starting in the fall of '17 that will continue to ramp up our revenues.

I think we've had a particularly interesting year in the conference from an activity and from a policy development standpoint. We adopted a new football schedule requirement that it requires no more than one FCS opponent per year, at least one FBS autonomy opponent each year, or Notre Dame, and two other FBS competitions as part of the -- or up to two as part of the rest of the schedule.

I think we have taken a moderate approach to scheduling. It probably isn't there permanently. I think it will likely evolve over time, but we think there are some very good regional match-ups that are against FCS schools, so we didn't want to eliminate them all together. On the other hand, it was clear that our nonconference schedules, some of them weren't as

strong as they needed to be so our@electricity directors took the step of putting this scheduling practice into place.

I think it will be a very good thing and I think it will strengthen what is already a very difficult season for our schools. There is no way that is more difficult to contest your championship than to play a full round robin.

We also adopted a serious misconduct policy and the policy details, due diligence that needs to be undertaken on each campus. It pertains to incoming freshmen as well as transfers and I think it requires that each institution make decisions about young people that have things in their past that may be questionable and it requires each institution to make sure that that due diligence goes beyond the staff of the sport that's involved, goes beyond the athletics department and all the way to the highest levels of the university. I think in doing that, we can count on universities to make the right choices.

We also adopted a new intra conference transfer rule for nonscholarship athletes. I know this has been referred to as the Baker Mayfield Rule, but I can tell you we dealt with it on a basis that took individuals out of the discussion. It would be easy to suggest that it was made because he's the Offensive Player of the Year now. I think it's the right outcome. I think he is a terrific player, but we looked at it in the context of who might be in the pipeline that this would apply to, and there probably will be others, not likely as high profile. But I just want to reiterate, the right decision was made.

We put forth the right choice. I think we had a number of different options, and I think we got it right. It benefits Baker Mayfield and it would benefit anybody else on our campuses that might be similarly situated in that they came into one institution as a nonscholarship athlete and got another opportunity at another institution. So I think that process was probably a little longer than it needed to be but we ended up getting it right.

We also put in place a champ game as I mentioned, that's been a long process, and I will talk more about that later. I think we've gone through an extensive period of research with our Board, a lot of data analysis over the last 18 months on conference composition.

Those discussions are ongoing, and as you know we have a board meeting tomorrow and conference composition and some of the decisions that we have before us will be on that agenda. All I can say is that in my four years plus in the conference, I don't know that we've every had a meeting of the Board that was more

frank and forthright and transparent than the last one we had, the one that was in early June.

I think that sentiment and tenor will continue tomorrow. Our CEOs are working very well together and I really expect that this will be a positive process for us. I think the other thing that obviously we have on our plate is that our Board has asked for a full accounting from Baylor University relative to the sexual assaults and their university's response to that situation. I think it's fair to say that they're deeply concerned about the associational elements of this. There are certainly -- our conference and our Board doesn't have any legal standing on some of the things that have taken place or are alleged to have taken place. But let it suffice to say as it pertains to all of our institutions, we are very committed as a group of ten schools to eradicating sexual assault on our campuses. It almost goes without saying that when you combine alcohol and drugs and raging hormones and the experiences of 18-22 years old, it's probably unrealistic to think that these kinds of things are never going to happen.

But we certainly want to make sure that from the center we do everything we can to ensure that they are minimized, if not eradicated. So additionally, from a purely athletic standpoint, we also have to be satisfied that there haven't been Big 12 rules broken and that there haven't been NCAA rules violated. That is the essence of our process, and it's very early in the process right now.

We will be continuing to work on it. Baylor has been very forthcoming and I don't have any doubt that they will continue to be forthcoming. We continue to support and believe in the national issues forums that we have been holding. I want to give particular credit to Bob Burda, who all of you know. Bob has taken this on and worked with Ken Luce from LDWW, and they have done a spectacular job of teeing up these issues forums. We have done four of them now, there were six panels all together and we will probably do a couple more. These have been long-form engagements to kind of capture a phrase on it.

We did them mostly because we wanted to be able to have discussion at a deeper level than is typically accomplished today.

We're in an electronic age, and there are a lot of snippets out there and I think these forums really have helped us do a deep dive. We've intentionally brought people together that disagreed with each other and I think we've been very successful and we're going to continue to do that. I guess most of you are also here to hear a little bit about football and the Big 12 has been very actively involved.

We are in a situation where we have a lot of people engaged at both the national level and at our conference level. We're in a situation where football is really under intense scrutiny. We all know it to be an extraordinary game. It's a lot of fun on Saturdays, it's a great rallying point for universities. It's a wonderful source of camaraderie and opportunity to go back to campus.

But new participant numbers are declining abruptly. New kids going into Pop Warner and the like. The numbers are plummeting. There continue to be tremendous safety concerns at all levels. The recruiting rules are bad until need of modernization and that includes the summer environment which as an aside we went through one year of a relatively new summer environment and it's an impossibility to manage the summer environment and it's current form and we have a lot of work to do there. The time demands for football players are particularly acute for kids in this sport. It's a lot of time and I think we have a lot of work to do to modernize that. We have 12 pending class-action lawsuits and the plaintiffs in those lawsuits are primarily football and basketball players, men's basketball players, but some of them, the plaintiffs groups vary somewhat.

There is a growing trend toward individual concussion lawsuits and I think you will see an ongoing proliferation of that. In my role as Chair of the Football Oversight Committee under the NCAA we're spending a lot of time on all those issues. There is full engagement by all ten of the FBS conferences and by the FCS conferences. From our league, in addition to my service, Ed Stewart serves on the Football Rules Committee which is a significant commitment. Of course, Kirby Hocutt will chair the College Football Playoff Selection Group this year. And we've got a lot of people that are actively involved in the AFCA, the American Football Coaches Association. So there is a lot going on at the national level. I don't know that it's going to abate anytime soon.

I think that we are going to have to deal with all of the things I've mention and had probably a few that are unanticipated. But at the same time, the Big 12 really embraces college football, and we play it very well. We played it well last year and we've played it well throughout our life.

I think we will continue to be there. We have tremendous coaches and athletes, and you'll meet all the coaches and a lot of the athletes during the course of the next couple of days. Walt Anderson is here, and I will tell you I don't think there is a better coordinator of officials than Walt Anderson and I think we've got the best staff of officials as well. We don't get them all right, aspirationally we always try to, but I feel very

fortunate to have the crew that we have working on the field for us.

They work very hard at it, and I think that our games will be exceedingly well officiated this year. We did lose two officials to the National Football League this year. Couple things we are going to do different than in previous years. We are putting in place a multi-capture video system that will allow us to get a view from every vantage point within the stadium. This will allow us to capture in-house video Board angles. It will also allow us to capture the stuff that our television partners are putting on the air but we will also get all the angles that they don't put on the air. It should give us an opportunity for replay that is enhanced. And I think the other thing that we have done, and it goes back to the safety issue is we were the first conference to adopt and then subsequently advocate nationally for the unchallengeable authority of sports medicine professionals to make decisions on return-to-play and return-to-learn especially surrounding head injuries and concussions.

Our contact rule for in-season regular, full contact is about a third less than the national rule, and we're continuing to push for our rule to be the national rule, and I think that we will see that in football oversight in the not-to-distant future, and I will be surprised if it's not adopted. I think the other thing that bears mentioning is that college football continues to be an extraordinary source of opportunity. One in five of our football players is a first-generation college student. They tend to graduate at a higher rate. They tend to graduate with a lot less debt and, you know, the college scholarship program not just in football but in all things, all sports, is the second largest scholarship program in the history of the United States. Second only to the GI Bill of Rights.

Think about that. It's \$2.7 billion a year and college football is obviously the biggest scholarship program among all those sports. We've got many challenges but this is a cherished tradition in our country, and this promises to be another really outstanding year for our league. We've got great venues. We've got great ticket sales. There's no question, as I said earlier, that the full Round Robin is the most difficult way to contest your championship. Nobody is going to win a championship in this league by who they don't play. You can look around at all the others and you can come up with examples of where that exact thing has happened. Somebody wins a championship by one or two that they avoid playing.

This year it's been mentioned, I think, but it bears mentioning again 15 of our nonconference games are going to be against teams that were in Bowls last year and that includes five match-ups against institutions

that were in the New York Six. So we've got a difficult preseason and one that will likely have a lot to say about what the rest of the year looks like.

Oklahoma is picked first in the league. They got all but two of the votes in the media poll. But we have a situation where nine out of ten of our schools return a starting quarterback. Starting quarterbacks mean good football teams and competitive football teams. So our history, despite Oklahoma getting almost all of the first-place votes, our history is that favorites are challenged every week. They are going to be this year as well. I think we will have a bunch of good football teams led as I said by good quarterbacks and I just -- you're going to meet a lot of them in the coming couple of days. I can't wait for the season to get started.

It's going to be a year that I think is really going to give us an opportunity to demonstrate that we can play at a high level, and frankly, we haven't done as good of a job in the postseason as any of us would like. We were 2-5 two years ago and we were 3-4 last year. So we have a lot of work to do and yet as mentioned, I think we have an awful lot of components of quality competition. Let me stop there and I will be happy to answer your questions.

Q. Bob, you said Baylor has been forthcoming with all the information that you've requested. Does that mean they have given you all the information that you've asked for, or have they not, and do you have a timetable for which you want to see all that?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: That's not quite what I said, Jake. I've met with Baylor leadership including the interim president and the chair of the Board and another chair of one of their significant committees of the Board of Regents and they have indicated that they don't have a written report. They will be meeting with our Board tomorrow and we will provide an opportunity for Board members to ask questions and they will make a presentation. They have told us that there is not a written report and what's out there, what we have in writing is what you have in writing. That is the finding of facts and the steps behind it.

But we will have an opportunity to -- they've expressed their willingness and we will have an opportunity to pose any questions that we want to ask and it's an ongoing process. It isn't going to be completed tomorrow, but I think that we will take a big step down the path and I think we will also have the opportunity to get a little more information about where the rules violations, if there are any, might intersect at the Big XII level and also at the NCAA level. And Baylor voluntarily met with the NCAA infractions staff early in this process. It's been 90 days ago now.

I'm not aware of whether or not there is an ongoing

process there with the NCAA, but Baylor has been forthright in doing that. My comment was intended to say they've been cooperative, but we're not done with this process.

Q. Is it your belief that you and the Board, when it's all said and done, you will have more information from either the Baylor or the Pepper Hamilton folks? And secondly, how would you gauge feelings toward this? Is it anger, frustration? Is there any serious momentum to vote Baylor out of the Big XII? How would you gauge their overall feelings? Bob.

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: What was the first part of that?

Q. Are you going to get more information than the public?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Yeah, we will get more than the public. There isn't any doubt about that. We already have more than the public on an oral basis. So any discussion of steps the Conference would take would be premature at this point. This is an ongoing process and it will continue for a while, but tomorrow is another step in that process.

So I think that relative to Pepper Hamilton, Baylor is the client of Pepper Hamilton, the firm wouldn't give us anything even if we asked. So anything we would get in addition would have to come through the university because they're the client of the law firm. Does that cover all the components of what you asked?

Q. Yes.

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Okay.

Q. Bob, regardless of what information that Baylor chooses to share or not share going forward there is already information out there with regard to coaches who are currently on staff. I want to ask you this, you're talk about the opinions of Big 12 presidents and how they feel about something. As the Big 12 Commissioner, also as a dad who has daughters, the fact that Kendal Briles, Phil Bennett and Jeff Lebby remain on staff at Baylor, I want to know how you feel about that.

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Well, I don't know that I can adequately address that because I know what you know. So if you know more about those three in specific, I guess people would be glad to know the information. I've asked questions about remaining members. I've asked questions about cultural aspects of the staff and the football team. I have empathy for some of the young men on the football team and some of the people that are very close to the staff, because it would be easy to paint this with a complete broad brush and have everybody presume to be implicated

and guilty, that certainly is not the case.

So, you know, I don't have any inside information that would allow me to differentiate among staff members or among team members, but I have asked that question and I have also asked the question about how do we ensure that we're not going to have other incidents, because we have had some incidents in the past. There was an academic scandal in the late 90s and then there was the basketball situation shortly after the -- well, 2004 or 2005.

So from a governance standpoint, how do we ensure that these kinds of things or other things that would be inappropriate? How are we going to ensure that the governance is in place to make sure they don't happen again? And that's the basis often we're dealing with it. But I want to reiterate we don't have legal standing. We have associational issues and we have -- I think that there are certainly those among or Board, to go back to Brian's question, that have felt that the image of the Big 12 and the other members of the Big 12 have been sullied as a result of this incident. It's gotten a lot of publicity, obviously, so that's the reason the Board took the steps they took, but your question is indicative of the ongoing process. There are questions to be answered.

Q. Have there been discussions, or do you anticipate discussions as a conference among the institutions regarding the potential for player boycotts of events in a heightened atmosphere of protest on campus, recently?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: You know, that's a great question, and I think that we have actually talked about it a fair amount as a staff, and we've put a little bit of a protocol together. You know, there are a lot of different components to that, because you can -- it may be student-athlete activism that comes into play at an event or around an event. It could be civil disobedience of one sort or another that's unrelated to athletic participants but has an intersection with one of our football games or basketball games or those kinds of things.

We have talked about what is the institutional responsibility versus what is the conference's responsibility and how we go about separating those things. But I think that there is every possibility that we could see some of that. We saw little flashes of it with the Northwestern Union discussions, and I don't think that's farfetched at all.

You know, I think the other thing is, we've seen acts of terror that have come where large groups of people gather and there's probably nothing more than symbolic of the American spirit than some of our public assembly venues, and frankly, I'm somewhat surprised

that they haven't been targeted.

Q. Earlier you said that the Big 12 had additional information the public would not know. You said to the second question that you kinda knew what we knew. Could you clarify that? What did you take away from the meeting with the Baylor leadership and what did you learn in that meeting that you didn't previously?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Relative to the last part of it, I'm not at liberty to talk about that. They're confidential discussions and I think they'll stay that way. I didn't get any additional information about the question that was asked earlier, relative to the staff, although I asked the cultural questions that I alluded to earlier. I think our CEOs will ask different questions than I posed. I expect to learn more tomorrow, but, you know, this is going to be a process. It isn't going to go away soon, and I don't know how to characterize it other than that.

I think there are going to be things that we ask questions about that we're not going to share publicly and that will just be the way it is.

Q. You referenced the championship game starting next season. Gotta determine how you pick the two teams for that. Are you going to take an advisory role, a leadership role? What is going to be your role in those discussions? What do you think is the best way to pick those two squads?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Well, my role is always advisory because I don't have a vote on it. Among the things that I expect will happen, as I think we will probably end up playing divisions, I think our two champions of those divisions will end up likely playing each other in the championship game. I think we will definitely play the game at a neutral site. I don't see us playing on campus, and we're going to go through an RFP process. We will have a sub group of our athletic directors that will -- there's a three-person subgroup that's going to be put together that will ultimately advise the full group. But it will be a recommendation on all of those things will be developed by our advisory group and submitted to the ADs and ultimately approved by the CEO group, the Board.

I would like to have all those questions answered by first of November, middle of November, by the end of the football season for sure. I would like to know our site and date and we have some work to do with our TV partners, as has been reported, ESPN and Fox both have the obligation and the prerogative to host the games. Fox would host them on, I'm going to check my notes here, I believe Fox hosts on the odd years and ESPN on the even years, but those are ongoing. We don't have those finalized yet. We've asked for a

game time that's been 11 a.m. central and 7 p.m. central kick-off times which is the window that we have for Saturday football games.

So those are components of it that we know a fair amount about at this point and I wouldn't suggest that all of those things are going to be resolved just as I detailed them, but my guess is based upon conversations with our ADs that those things are among the things that would end up being resolved.

Q. Bob, on one hand you said that the Big 12 has no legal standing on Baylor and yet on the other hand you made a provocative comment earlier that the image of the Big 12 has been sullied according to some of your presidents. You also acknowledge that you don't have written information, so I guess I'm a little confused about what is the ultimate end game in the point of this exercise in making Baylor do this? Because it doesn't seem like there is any sort of conclusion that can be drawn -- you mentioned associational elements, that's the NCAA's jurisdiction. So what is the point of this exercise?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: No, I don't think associational elements is the NCAA. I think -- I'm not talking about "association" with a capital A, I'm talking about small A and each of us are affiliated in the Big 12. When one member's reputation is damaged, I think all of our images are damaged. So that part of it is -- I don't see that as the province of the national office.

I think it's an affiliational issue that all of us share. I think some have stronger feelings about it than others and we will probably hear a little more about that during the meeting tomorrow, but I expect it will be collegial, I don't think it will be -- I think there will be hard questions. There isn't any doubt about that, to the extent that they can answer them, they will answer them. But there are a lot of pending processes in place right now and all of that's not going to go away anytime soon. So to say that we have a vision for what the end game is would not be accurate.

Q. Piggybacking on Barry's question earlier, how will the conference be divided assuming you're going to split the conference into divisions?

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: We've talked about a number of different ways. We've talked about an equity base that would on a rotational basis be responsive to how teams are finishing in the overall standings. There has been some talk about staying with one division and going, you know, that route. I sense less enthusiasm for that. I think we could do a geographic designation of some sort. That gets a little bit difficult going east/west or north/south, and oftentimes those don't

make sense.

The other thing we have to overlay, and I should have mentioned it with Barry's question, we have to overlay traditional rivals, how you do that and how you separate them. One of the things we would like to do is avoid late-season rematches if we can. So as you look at divisions, you want to try and be thoughtful about the rivalry games, because you don't want -- last year was a good example.

Had we had a championship game last year, it would have been a rematch of Oklahoma State and Oklahoma, and it would have been a week after they had just played. That's happened some. In the Pac 12 I know that Stanford and UCLA played each other on consecutive weeks a few years ago, but it's not ideal. If we can figure out a model that would allow the divisional games to be played either all early or all late. There's a lot of moving parts. You've got to build in byes and you don't want people that are playing on Saturday having to play on Thursday when one of them had a bye the week before. We've got a lot of work to do on scheduling and the divisional structure is going to be a big part of that.

THE MODERATOR: Commissioner, thank you very much for your comments.

COMMISSIONER BOWLSBY: Thank you all for being here.