

CU faces fight over Big 12 exit plan

Conflict arises over penalty for leaving conference

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The University of Colorado is locked in a high-stakes game of chicken with the Big 12 Conference that might not be resolved for months.

Millions of dollars are at stake as the school tries to part ways with the conference it has been a member of for 14 years.

CU representatives followed conference bylaws two weeks ago by providing two years' notice of the school's intent to leave the league for the Pac-10 Conference in 2012.

The bylaws clearly state the penalty for a school leaving and giving two years' notice is a 50 percent reduction in conference distributions it is owed in its final two years in the league.

The day after Colorado made its announcement, rival Nebraska announced it would leave the league for the Big Ten in 2011, one year earlier than CU.

By leaving the conference with only one year notice, Nebraska is supposed to forfeit 80 percent of its expected conference distribution, according to the bylaws.

The Cornhuskers' announcement complicated things dramatically for both CU and the Big 12.

The conference is not fond of the idea of having one of its members competing as a lame duck in the conference for two full years. Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe is on record saying so.

If the conference has its way, Colorado will join Nebraska in leaving in 2011, avoiding a two-year exit process and one year with an odd number of teams in the league, which would complicate scheduling.

However, the Big 12 not only wants CU to leave a year early, it wants to withhold the same amount of money in expected conference distributions as it intends to withhold from Nebraska -- 80 percent. The problem there is Colorado followed the rules and gave two years' notice, which means the Big 12 is not entitled to more.

When the CU Board of Regents met with its attorneys days before the school accepted an invitation from the Pac-10, the attorneys told the board the move would cost somewhere between \$9 million and \$14 million.

The board is expected to receive another briefing this week on the school's legal options concerning its move to the Pac-10. Those numbers aren't expected to change. Instead, it is designed more as an opportunity for regents to receive clarification of questions that have been raised in the 10 days since the announcement.

Published reports have suggested Colorado and Nebraska could owe the league as much as \$40 million for leaving the Big 12. Several CU sources have said that number is wildly inaccurate.

Two Buffs on Outland list

Colorado offensive linemen Nate Solder and Ryan Miller were named to the preseason watchlist for the 2010 Outland Trophy. The Buffs joined 61 other players on the list.

The award -- the third oldest major award in college football -- is given annually to the nation's best player from a list of positions that includes offensive and defensive tackle, guard and center.

Solder will be a fifth-year senior in 2010 and is a returning first-team All-Big 12 Conference player, as selected by the league's coaches in 2009.

Miller will be a fourth-year junior this fall. He has moved between guard and tackle throughout his career, but is expected to play right guard this season.

Colorado has never had a player win the Outland Trophy, which has been awarded since 1946.

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