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Bohn says Big 12 "best for Colorado"

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 06/03/2010 01:00:00 AM MDT

Updated: 06/03/2010 01:18:28 AM MDT



CU athletic director Mike Bohn (Denver Post file photo)

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — If Texas leaves the Big 12 Conference, it won't happen unless the conference crumbles first, Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds said during the Big 12 spring meetings Wednesday.

He said that also goes for Colorado.

"We're not going to go first," Dodds said. "We can go places, but we're not. We're not — unless

somebody else leaves. We're not going to lead that train."

Texas, boasting the biggest athletic department budget in the country and one of the biggest football draws, is a huge piece to any realignment puzzle. There has been speculation the Big Ten will try to lure the Longhorns, then have other Big 12 members follow.

Dodds said he thinks the only way Colorado would leave the Big 12 is if other members bolt first.

"If the Big 12 lost members, I think Colorado would look strongly at the Pac-10," Dodds said. "I just don't see Colorado leaving the Big 12. I just think they're better off here."

So does CU athletic director Mike Bohn, who was noncommittal to any realignment question except his commitment to the Big 12.

"The best thing for Colorado is to be in the Big 12 Conference," Bohn said. "Colorado has been committed to the Big 12 Conference all along. Colorado was instrumental in helping form the Big 12 Conference."

He did, however, say CU will be proactive should the landscape change.

"When there's so much uncertainty out there," Bohn said, "you certainly have to think about what that means for potential challenges down the road."

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And if Texas and others schools left, what would Colorado do?

"Speculation about other members and how that impacts our league is simply that," Bohn said, "and I don't believe that's going to happen."

Many nerves in the league will calm if the Big 12 can negotiate a TV contract similar to the 12-year, \$1.86 billion deal the Atlantic Coast Conference signed with ESPN last month.

"It's very important," Bohn said. "It's such a competitive landscape nationally, we recognize the importance of being within that scenario."

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All Things Colorado Sports — Blogs — The Denver Post

JUNE 2, 2010, 3:07 PM

Big 12 has options in TV market

By **JOHN HENDERSON** |  1 Comment

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — More than a few eyebrows rose around the country last month when the Atlantic Coast Conference signed a 12-year, \$1.86 billion deal with ESPN. The ACC? That many people want to watch Maryland vs. Boston College?

A lot more people around the country want to see the Big 12. That's why the corner of commissioner Dan Beebe's mouth rose along with all those eyes around him. His negotiations with ESPN next April will make or break this conference.

Big 12 teams are only receiving \$7 million-\$12 million a year. That's compared to the \$20 million-\$22 million in the Big Ten and \$17 million in the SEC.

What makes Beebe confident the Big 12 can top the ACC? Competition. Other networks could challenge ESPN are Turner Sports and NBC Comcast.

"I think more people will be interested in college athletics," Texas A&M athletic director Bill Byrnes said. "I think it's a great opportunity for us."

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Expansion talk has Big 12 on edge

Presidents to join discussions today

Associated Press
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 06/03/2010 12:15:38 AM MDT

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Like the song says, breaking up is hard to do. Whether the Big 12 schools are committed to staying together is an open question in the eyes of commissioner Dan Beebe.

"There's a lot of interest by a lot of the athletic directors to try to get to the same goal I have -- some sort of conclusion on the commitment of all institutions," Beebe said Wednesday during the league's spring meetings. "I just don't know if that's possible or not. The presidents and the board are the ones who have to answer that."

League presidents will meet with athletic directors Thursday and then get together behind closed doors for more discussions. The meetings will conclude with further meetings by presidents on Friday and what some hope will be a final resolution to the turmoil stemming from the Big Ten's announcement that it is studying expansion from 11 members -- and Big 12 members Nebraska and Missouri saying they might be interested.

"I think your story is going to come when the presidents are here," Nebraska athletic director Tom Osborne told reporters Wednesday.

Asked directly if the Huskers would leave for the more lucrative Big Ten, Osborne shrugged.

"It's important to understand I don't think the Big Ten knows what they're going to do," he said. "They might add one (school), they may add three, they may add five. So we have no indication right now even what's going to happen."

Missouri athletic director Mike Alden said little when cornered by reporters.

"Missouri's a proud member of the Big 12," he said. "We have been for some time. We look forward to the future."

If the Big 12 does break up, every school is carefully checking what options it might have going forward.

For some, such as Oklahoma and Texas, the possibilities would be good. For those in more sparsely populated states such as Kansas and Iowa, the future might not seem nearly so bright.

"This is serious, serious, serious," said Kansas athletic director Lew Perkins.

Osborne said Nebraska has no desire to leave the Big 12. Nevertheless, the Huskers and Missouri could make more money as Big Ten members and both have been unhappy with many things in the Big 12. Missouri does not like the unequal revenue distribution that favors schools making the most football television appearances.

Nebraska is resentful of the apparent drift toward making Dallas the permanent site of the conference football championship game. That's a long drive for Husker fans who would like to see the game alternated between Dallas and Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium.

"We like the Big 12. We're not looking to leave. We're not mad at anybody. We're not upset about anything," said Osborne. "So those things will all be decided hopefully (Thursday). But before too long."

Texas A&M's Bill Byrne was also hopeful the presidents could decide something, although others did not share his optimism.

"From A&M's perspective, we want the Big 12 to stay together," Byrne said. "I think our meetings tomorrow when we have the presidents and chancellors who are going to make decisions will be very interesting. My hope is once we finish those, we should be coming out and saying we're in this together."

"I think we need to have some plans and I think those are being developed right now as to ways we can keep the conference together."

Any school that does leave will pay dearly. If a school gives two years` notice, it will be penalized 50 percent of its share of conference revenues for those two years. The penalty would increase with less notice given, up to 90 percent.

Adding to the uncertainty have been reports that Colorado, which recruits heavily in California, might be open to an invitation to join the Pac-10, which has also indicated it might expand.

"Colorado has been committed to the Big 12 Conference all along," said Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn. "However, when there`s so much uncertainty out there, you have to begin to think about what that means for potential challenges down the road. It will be great having the presidents and chancellors with us tomorrow."

Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione and president David Boren have been outspoken in their desire to keep the Big 12 together. Boren was recently quoted as saying Missouri and Nebraska would one day regret a decision to go to the Big Ten.

"I think our league is structured well enough and has been strong enough to withstand a lot of the conjecture and speculation that`s out there," said Castiglione. "It doesn`t mean we`re overlooking it. But we`re thinking more about what we have and what we can do in the future than what we don`t have."

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Revenue sharing not on agenda at Big 12 meetings

BY STU DURANDO sdurando@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8232

Thursday, Jun. 03 2010

KANSAS CITY — The release of the Big 12's television football schedule passed with little notice this week, but athletics directors likely noticed yet another indication of the power wielded by Texas.

The Longhorns have five games on the preliminary list, each one adding to the Texas athletic department's coffers thanks to the conference's unbalanced revenue sharing policy, which rewards TV appearances.

The policy is a point of contention for some at a time when the Big Ten, which generates more money and shares revenue equally, might be courting Big 12 schools for membership. The critics have included Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton and football coach Gary Pinkel.

"A lot is made of distribution. It's not discriminatory," Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe said. "Any institution that raises its program to a level where it gets more exposure on television is going to have a chance to get more revenue."

During the three fiscal years from 2005-06 to 2007-08, Texas collected \$29.4 million from the Big 12, receiving the league's biggest payout each year, according to documents filed with the IRS. Oklahoma was No. 2 each year and received \$28 million.

Missouri received a share of \$22.6 million to rank No. 6. By comparison, the Big Ten disbursed an average of \$18.8 million to each of its schools for 2007-08, the last year tax information is available.

"It's never been a system that's been able to be adjusted, but on the other hand it appears to work for many," Colorado athletics director Mike Bohn said. "At times it's been great. I shouldn't say great. It's been, for the most part, effective in rewarding programs that play certain schedules and are rewarded for on-the-field success."

Revenue sharing has been addressed at the Big 12 meetings in recent years but

is not on the agenda this week. Previous discussions have not led to a vote.

The policy has been in place since the conference formed. The schools share equally in revenue from bowl games, the football championship and other sources. The biggest difference comes from TV.

Half of that revenue is split down the middle. The other half is placed in an appearance pool. The schools that are on TV the most get a bigger share, with an emphasis on appearing on over-the-air network TV.

Baylor brought up the rear in revenue distribution from 2006-08 at \$20.4 million and continues to struggle to secure TV dates. The Bears are scheduled for one game on Versus while the Longhorns will be on TV every Saturday in September, twice on ABC.

"I went through that at Oregon (1984 to '92) in the Pac-10," said Texas A&M athletics director Bill Byrne. "Our goal was to build our program to the point where we weren't one of the lesser ones, and we did that. I had the same attitude at A&M."

Said Kansas athletics director Lew Perkins: "Revenue sharing is an issue, but if you do some other things there are ways to offset that."

The difference between the biggest and smallest shares in the Big 12 from 2006 to '08 ranged from \$2.9 million to \$3.2 million in a given year. The Pac-10 also has an unbalanced revenue policy that has created a wide divide. In 2008, USC received \$4.5 million more than Stanford.

The Big 12 has made significant strides in the amount of money it distributes. The pot increased from \$90 million in 2006 to \$130 million in '09, although a breakdown for individual schools is not available for last year. The conference will announce this week the amount it will distribute for 2009-10.

"We have maximized the value of the Big 12 and maximizing has enhanced all 12 institutions," Oklahoma athletics director Joe Castiglione said. "We'd like to be equal in terms of revenue in the Big Ten and SEC. But they have however many more people living within their footprint. It hasn't prevented us from being successful in getting to national championship games in a variety of sports."

The Big 12 is trying to play catch-up with the Big Ten, SEC and ACC. In 2008, the conference ranked fourth in cumulative revenue distribution and the average per school. The Big Ten was first with a whopping \$206 million handed out to 11 schools, largely because of the windfall realized from the Big Ten Network.

But Beebe pointed out that much of the gap is related to the cycle of TV negotiations. The other three conferences have struck major deals since the Big 12's last contract. The Big 12 figures to make up much of the difference when it negotiates next year with Fox and later with ESPN.

With that in mind, Beebe said revenue sharing is not a priority topic this week.

"I did my duty putting it all before the group," he said of previous years. "I would certainly resurrect that material and put more in front of them if they wish, but it would be up to the membership. My feeling is that isn't the focus we need. We need to focus on growing the pie even larger."

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