

# Beebe upbeat about Big 12

## Commissioner touts plan to stabilize league

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe used the words "comfortable, encouraged and optimistic" separately Friday to describe how he feels about the future of his league at the conclusion of four days of spring meetings here.

He also acknowledged the next six months are "critical" to the future of the conference.

It was one of several points in a 35-minute press briefing in a tiny, packed conference room at the Intercontinental Hotel when Beebe seemed to contradict himself.

But it was what he didn't say that had most of the reporters in the room continuing to question the long-term viability of the 14-year-old league.

Beebe said he and the conference board of directors (presidents and chancellors) had agreed on a plan to assure the stabilization of the league in the face of possible attempts to pick it apart by the Big Ten and Pac-10 conferences. Yet, he failed to provide any details of the plan.

"We've had very productive meetings with a lot of candid discussions, and I'm very encouraged by the process we have set forth to ensure the solidification of this conference," Beebe said.

Beebe would not say whether extending the number of years notice the league requires to be given if a school intends to leave the conference was explored or possibly raising financial penalties for defection is an option.

"I won't get into the details about what has been discussed about the process," Beebe said.

Texas president Williams Powers was supposed to join Beebe to answer questions from the media but he was not able to participate because of a travel conflict.

Beebe came to the meetings talking about wanting to have a clear idea by the time the week ended of what schools are committed to the conference and which schools are not. Several Big 12 sources told the Camera that Missouri was the one school that consistently refused to pledge allegiance to the league throughout the week. Missouri is rumored to be a top target for the Big Ten.

Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton told reporters Friday. "We're not shutting our ears to anything."

Beebe said the league made a "compelling case" for why the current Big 12 members should stay the course together. He said the league has been given "analysis and projections" that show it will be able to grow its television revenue to rival the deals reached in recent months by other conferences around the nation such as the SEC and ACC.

Big 12 schools were paid between \$7 and \$10 million last year depending on television appearances. Those numbers fall well short of the \$22 million paid to Big Ten members.

Beebe will begin negotiations with Fox Sports next April on a new deal, but the fact that the league's television contracts with ESPN and Fox are staggered and are not negotiated at the same time likely prevents the conference from maximizing revenue. The Big 12 partnership with ESPN runs through the 2015-16 school year.

The commissioner said the current Big 12 schools belong together because they are "an association of institutions that are most meaningful in this part of the country." He said the league is already a regular contender for national championships in almost every sport it sponsors, a demonstration of its true strength.

Beebe said he is aware of a report that revealed Big Ten conference commissioner Jim Delany was involved in an email conversation with Ohio State president Gordon Gee regarding the possibility of adding Texas to that league. Beebe said little when asked about reports that the Pac-10 could invite Colorado, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State to form a super conference.

"I don't blame those conferences for looking at our institutions," he said. "They're valuable institutions with a lot of great history and tradition and could add a lot. But I think we have compelling case for why these 12 should stay together."

Beebe disagreed with the idea that the end game from months of rumors, speculation and worry over conference expansion and realignment ultimately will be the formation of four super conferences. He said the idea would be bad for student-athletes and athletic departments and asserted that the most experienced minds in collegiate athletics are generally in agreement that 12 members is the optimum number for a larger conference.

"As I said earlier, those that are considerate about what we have in higher education are going to have to think long and hard about the model and what it will do to intercollegiate athletics and higher education," he said of the possibility of 16 or more teams in a conference.

"I think if it moves to that, the pressures that are going to be accompanying those institutions in those four conferences, particularly those that are high-profile, to win are going to be immense. You will see more churning of ADs and coaches. I think you're going to have a lesser chance to compete for a national championship coming out of those conferences."

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## Big 12 sets sites for championship games

### CU to receive about \$9 million from conference

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Big 12 officials managed to get some work done this week at its spring meetings despite the massive distraction created by talk of conference expansion and realignment.

Commissioner Dan Beebe announced future championship sites in four sports Friday and also revealed the league will distribute \$139 million to its members this year. That is an increase of \$9 million from last year.

Colorado is expected to receive a little more than \$9 million of the distribution. The conference distributes most revenue evenly except for television money.

The Big 12 board of directors authorized Beebe to negotiate with Jerry Jones to hold the 2011, 2012 and 2013 football conference championship games in Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. The game was played there for the first time last fall and is scheduled to be held there once again in December.

Despite the fact that the game will be there for five consecutive years, Beebe said the conference is not anchoring the championship game to any site or city. Some schools in the Big 12 North Division believe having the game in Cowboys Stadium every year unfairly favors south division teams.

"We have not decided to anchor the championship games," Beebe said, before making the case for having them anchored. "We've extended them and there is going to be a concerted effort for all of these to get a base fan group that are going to come to the games no matter who is there."

"The SEC has that type of situation in Atlanta, 30,000-40,000 people are going to be there no matter what. I think that is somewhat of a benefit. As I said previously, Cowboys Stadium is a world class facility in our part of the country. No matter what part of our region it would exist in, we would have to look carefully at using it as often as we could."

Beebe also announced the men's basketball tournament will be held in Kansas City in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

The women's tournament also will be in Kansas City in 2012 and 2013, but the league did not commit to it being there all three years because it is studying the idea of holding it in a separate city within the Big 12 footprint that would embrace it regardless of which teams are favored to win.

"There are a lot of positives for the women's basketball tournament to be connected to the men, but there are also some things they want to fully explore to see if there is a passionate community that would come out for women's basketball regardless," Beebe said.

If Missouri eventually leaves the Big 12 to join the Big Ten as rumored, it would leave the Big 12 holding its basketball tournaments in a city inside a state without a conference member. Beebe said he doesn't necessarily see that as a problem in this specific instance because Kansas City is centrally located between a handful of conference schools even though it is in Missouri.

"That's certainly something that we would have to visit," Beebe said. "I'd think you would have to look at Kansas City a little differently because of the close connection to Kansas, Kansas State, probably Iowa State and Nebraska. So it's a little different than if it was St. Louis."

Colorado is regularly a strong contender for the Big 12 soccer championship and coach Bill Hempen and his Buffs will compete for the 2011 and 2012 titles in San Antonio.

Beebe said the conference baseball championships will be held in Oklahoma City in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

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## Will the Big 12 survive? Beebe says yes

By BLAIR KERKHOFF  
The Kansas City Star

Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe emerged from meetings with the league's chancellors and presidents today confident that he'll have a conference to oversee in the future.

"I'm very encouraged by the discussions and the course of action we're taking," Beebe said.

That course may include a deadline to members reported to be targets of other conference's expansion plans, notably the Big Ten and Pac-10.

Beebe wasn't specific about the deadline.

"A process has been set," Beebe said. "It's firm. I'm not going to engage in what that is."

The Big 12 entered its annual meetings at the InterContinental Kansas City on the Plaza hoping to firm up its future, but reports during the meetings suggested a conference in trouble.

One had the Pac-10 inviting six league members, and Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn said he believed his school would be one of them.

On Friday, it was revealed that Ohio State president Gordon Gee told Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany in an April 20 e-mail that Gee had spoken to Texas president Bill Powers.

"I'm aware of the report," Beebe said.

Beebe said he's confident his conference can stave off getting picked apart because the Big 12 will offer a strong revenue package based on future football contracts, and that the Big 12 will raise its annual payouts from the current high end of \$12 million annually closer to what teams in higher paying conferences like the Southeastern, which distributes about \$17 million, get.

"We have had analysis and projections that we will be every bit as well compensated in the future," Beebe said.

But the ball is in the courts of other conferences. Will the Big Ten want Missouri and Nebraska?

Will the Pac-10 invite Colorado, Texas, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech as reported?

"I want to emphasize that I'm encouraged by the meetings we've had," Beebe said.

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