

Ringo: Possible CU league shift depends on Big Ten

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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When the dust clears from all the conference realignment and expansion rumors, speculation and politics sometime before the end of the year, the University of Colorado could find itself heading to the Mountain West Conference.

Yes, it is a possibility.

But before Colorado fans start jumping off the Flatirons, preferring that to life in the same conference as Colorado State, they should realize that doomsday scenario is only a possibility and probably not the most likely one.

Here is a review of where we are.

It should be noted University of Colorado officials have opted to keep quiet on the issue for now, referring all comments on expansion to Big 12 Conference commissioner Dan Beebe or the chair of the league's board of directors, Texas president William Powers.

The majority of Big 12 members prefer to remain together, including those in Texas. Those preferences were stated last week when the league's presidents, chancellors and athletic directors met in Kansas City.

The holdup is an unwillingness from Nebraska and Missouri to fully commit to that future as long as the Big Ten Conference keeps flirting with them. The Big Ten could eventually invite the two Big 12 schools to be a part of that league's expansion to 14 or 16 teams.

However, the Big Ten really wants Notre Dame and would probably stop its expansion at one school -- a total of 12 teams -- if the Fighting Irish opted to give up their traditional independent status. The Big 10 is already at the top of the heap financially and adding Notre Dame would be a significant boost to the league's network, which is already helping pay member schools \$20 million annually.

Notre Dame satisfying the Big Ten's appetite is the best-case scenario for the Big 12 at this point. The league could mend its wounds with Nebraska and Missouri and carry on with only some hurt feelings to overcome, but that has been the case in this league from the start. No big deal.

If the Big Ten can't get Notre Dame and does invite Nebraska and Missouri, that's when things could get hairy for the Buffs, Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State and Baylor.

The Pac-10 is considering several options to expand, including inviting six schools from the Big 12 to form a super conference covering most of the population centers in the western half of the country.

There are two scenarios at play. One involves Colorado joining Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State in the merger. The other has CU on the outside looking in with Baylor replacing the Buffs in the new league thanks to some Texas political shenanigans.

Texas is the cash cow here and the primary target of this move if it's made. It could be that adding Texas to the Pac-10 would provide such a heavy pay day to the Pac-10 or Pac-16, that the current members of that league would be willing to overlook the downside of Baylor or Texas Tech or Oklahoma State for that matter.

Members of the Texas Legislature and other powerful politicians in the Lone Star state are hard at work trying to make sure their schools get in at the expense of Colorado if the Pac-10 comes calling.

Colorado fans have been wondering for several days now why they aren't hearing a similar fuss being made here.

If the Pac-10 did choose Baylor over CU to get the Longhorns and all those Texas TVs, CU would likely have little choice

but to join the Mountain West, possibly accompanied by Kansas and Kansas State, giving the MWC 12 teams.

Not coincidentally, the MWC postponed any decision on expansion Monday until some of this plays out. It was planning to add Boise State, but when news broke late last week that several Big 12 schools could become free agents, it opted to wait and see if it could get a better deal.

Not every CU supporter looks at landing in the Mountain West with Kansas and Kansas State in a bad light.

Sure, it doesn't have the big bucks and traditional powers that would come with Pac-16, but the MWC would probably be a Bowl Championship Series Conference at that point and CU would probably have an easier time competing for championships as opposed to being in a division of the Pac-16 with Texas and Oklahoma.

The new Mountain West with Kansas and Kansas State combined with BYU, Utah, New Mexico and UNLV would be one of the best basketball conferences in the nation from the start.

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Baylor trying to push Colorado out of Pac-10 expansion

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

Posted: 06/07/2010 03:04:45 PM MDT

Updated: 06/07/2010 11:21:57 PM MDT



The Texas State Legislature might help Baylor bump out Colorado from Pac-10 expansion talk (Waco Tribune Herald)

Nebraska is Colorado's archrival in the fall, but it appears Baylor has replaced the Cornhuskers this summer. As the conference landscape

begins to tremor this week before a possible earthquake, Baylor is trying to elbow inside Colorado for possible membership in the Pac-10.

Powerful Baylor alumni said today that the Texas State Legislature is looking into ways to help their alma mater.

As Kip Averitt, who retired in March after 17 years as a state senator and is a 1977 Baylor grad, told The Denver Post: "If it's one or the other, I'd rather it be us than you."

Baylor officials began looking into options when reports surfaced last week that the Pac-10 is considering expanding with up to six Big 12 schools: Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Colorado.

Pac-10 commissioner Larry Scott refuses to divulge any schools, but Baylor would be the lone Big 12 South member not invited. Baylor has been a conference rival of Texas and Texas A&M since 1914.

"I think there's a desire to have regional participation in all of the athletics," said State Rep. Jim Dunnam (D-Waco), Baylor class of '86. "If you don't have Texas and Texas A&M and Tech and Baylor playing one another, you lose the regional nature of your conference."

"It's fun to play Ohio State every now and then but people come in day in, day out for that regional competition."

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Texas government has a history of helping its in-state schools. In 1994 when the Big Eight officially absorbed the Southwest Conference to form the Big 12, governor Ann Richards, a Baylor grad, is believed to have put pressure on the Longhorns to insist on Baylor's inclusion.

In emails acquired by The Dallas Morning News on Sunday, Austin lobbyist and Baylor regent Buddy Jones urged supporters in the legislature to help Baylor.

"We need to stop any bleeding that this PAC 10 offer might have caused for Baylor quickly," Jones wrote. "It is imperative that

[Blog: All Things Buffs](#)



The Post's Tom Kensler posts analysis, notes and minutiae on this blog devoted to CU athletics.

whatever happens the four Texas schools (and hopefully OU and OSU) agree to stick together."

Jones added, "My guess is that Colorado hasn't taken enough broadside hits to sink their boat yet and they may well be on the invite list. I hope

I'm wrong. But there's still time left to change the scoreboard. We aren't through."

Conceivably, the legislature could withhold public funds to Texas if it doesn't convince the Pac-10 to include Baylor. The state created the Permanent University Fund in 1876 to benefit the University of Texas and later Texas A&M.

Baylor, as a private school, gets no public funding. Baylor is hoping the Pac-10 and the Longhorns see the value in not separating the state's four Big 12 schools.

"We're on the same academic tier as Colorado," Averitt said. "Both of our schools are at the top of the spectrum. That can't be an issue. But for us down here, we're kind of a family. We like to compete against our family."

"It's nothing against Colorado at all. We like to travel up to Colorado from time to time. It's a beautiful state. But when it comes to conference realignment, it's a huge deal to Baylor University and central Texas economics."

Colorado's appeal to the Pac-10, besides a closer proximity, is it's a member of the prestigious American Association of Universities. While Baylor is not, it's considered one of the best academic institutions in Texas.

Athletically, Baylor boasts the most Big 12 championships

outside of Texas and Nebraska. Baylor officials

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Post Poll - Conference Call



Denver Post columnist Mark Kiszla says CU should keep conference alliance with the Rocky Mountains and join an expanded Mountain West Conference. What do you think?

☐ **Join Mountain West:** Conference rivals close by in an economically challenging time. What a great idea!

☐ **Stay in Big 12:** It's a great conference. Keep it as it is.

☐ **Join the Pac-10:** . . . or Pac-16? It would be a power conference, no doubt.



erence, no doubt.

quickly point out that Colorado does not carry non-revenue sports that are popular in the Pac-10 such as softball, baseball and men's tennis.

"We think that also should be a consideration," Averitt said. "We're across the board."

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn and Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe declined comment.

This fight may be only so much saber rattling if Nebraska and Missouri decide not to leave the Big 12 for the Big Ten. The conference gave the schools until Friday to decide.

If they leave, Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds said last week the Longhorns will not stay in a 10-team conference. The Pac-10 could then lure them away along with five other Big 12 schools. If Colorado isn't one of them, it would join Kansas, Kansas State and Iowa State as Big 12 teams without a conference.

Many in the Big 12 believe the conference will remain intact if Nebraska and Missouri stay. They may have to if the Big Ten does not offer invites which, as of Monday, it hadn't.

In the meantime, Nebraska officials are keeping mum. The Nebraska Board of Regents meet Friday and Saturday in Lincoln, but conference realignment is not on the current agenda although it could be added.

For Nebraska to change conferences, athletic director Tom Osborne must make a recommendation, chancellor Harvey Perlman must agree to it and the board ratify it.

Last week in the Big 12 Spring Meetings, Osborne mentioned his displeasure with how he feels the Big 12 caters to the South Division.

"Nebraska has been (angry) ever since Texas wanted to bring the academic level up," Dunnam said. "Since then, lo and behold, Nebraska has

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not been as competitive in football."

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MWC delays decision to add Boise State; now pondering CU

By Irv Moss
The Denver Post

Posted: 06/07/2010 12:34:53 PM MDT

Updated: 06/07/2010 09:37:30 PM MDT

JACKSON, Wyo. — The Mountain West Conference opted to table the question of expansion Monday in order to determine if there are additional candidates other than Boise State — possible the University of Colorado — to bring into the league.

Commissioner Craig Thompson made the announcement just before noon at a meeting of MWC school presidents, but also said he expects to at least re-open the question of adding Boise State from the Western Athletic Conference before the end of the month.

"Our board did not make a decision to expand at the present time," Thompson said. "Everything was on the table today. We reviewed what other conferences are doing and any new information coming out of the other conferences. Boise State

was one of the institutions discussed, along with others."

Asked if Colorado specifically came up in the discussions, Thompson said, "Yes".

"In part, we hesitated today because of what is going on in other conferences," Thompson said. "But, in part, also in our own conference. We've had members mentioned in the discussions of what is going on in other leagues.

"I've said many times that we're trying to be proactive in this and reactive at the same time. We didn't have to make a decision today. The topic of expansion is very much alive."

Colorado is waiting to see if it might be invited to the Pac-10 should the Big 12 break up. One the proposals the Pac-10 is considering is inviting up to six members of the current Big 12.

"We haven't asked our members to pledge allegiance to the Mountain West Conference," Thompson said. "We're in confusing times for everybody."

Thompson had indicated he leaned toward being proactive on the question of expansion before the meetings.

"I'm in agreement with the decision," Thompson said. "Our presidents are a very deliberate group. Maybe we'll have new information 10 days from now."

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Thompson said the question becomes much different if the MWC loses members instead of just discussing expansion.

However, Thompson said he was comfortable that the MWC's present nine members — Air Force, Colorado State, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, BYU, San Diego State, Nevada-Las Vegas and TCU — would be in tact to start the 2011-12 school year.

Thompson acknowledged that in order to add Boise State for the 2011 season, the WAC would have to be notified of the move by July 1. Thompson said the decision on Boise State could be made by conference call by the league's presidents at any time.

Thompson said he notified the administration at Boise State of the delay in making a decision, but he didn't have any discussions with any other institution. The subject of expansion was explored even to the point of going past 10 teams.

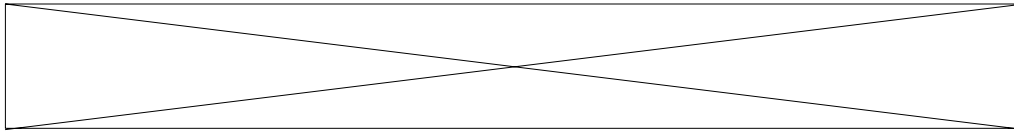
"We're comfortable with nine members," Thompson said. "Do we get better with 10, do we get better with 12? Is there a reason to expand at all?"

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CU's future could be in hands of Nebraska

Lori Obert written by: [Chris Vanderveen](#) ■ 9 days ago

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The University of Nebraska might very well control CU's athletic fate for the next decade or so to come - either NU or Notre Dame. Chew on that Colorado fans.

The Pac-10 appears ready to expand. The Big Ten appears ready to follow. It all has cast some serious doubts as to the future of the conference the University of Colorado and 11 other universities currently call home.

Media outlets from Chicago to Austin have surmised that Nebraska and the University of Missouri have been given a quickly-approaching deadline by the leaders of the Big 12 to decide if they want to stay in that conference or perhaps try to bolt to the Big Ten.

Notre Dame remains a lucrative prospect for the Big Ten as well.

Should Nebraska decide the Big 12 is no longer the place for it to reside, a chain of events would likely follow which would seriously disrupt and forever alter the field of play in college athletics.

"I think it'll be like a game of musical chairs," said Dallas Morning News reporter Robert Garrett who covers the Texas legislature in Austin.

And in Texas one school in particular is desperately trying to find itself a seat. It's a prospect that could leave CU without an immediate place to call home.

Over the weekend, the newly-hired President of Baylor University Ken Starr (yes, that Ken Starr) wrote a guest column in the Waco newspaper urging his fellow Texans to, in essence, support a package deal which would keep the four Big 12 Texas universities together.

The Pac-10 has indicated it might be willing to bring in six Big 12 schools. Colorado was on the initial list circulated by a number of media outlets (Baylor was not). Texas Tech, Texas, Texas A&M, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State were also on the widely circulated list.

"The situation is extremely fluid right now," wrote Starr. "It is our understanding that the Pac-10 Conference may be preparing to invite six Big 12 members to join a proposed 16-team mega-conference. Recent news reports indicate that Baylor's stock is rising and that it could be included among the teams invited to form a new conference."

Garrett told 9News that the behind-the-scenes lobbying to get Baylor in, and thus kick Colorado out, has been intense. It's led to a little Colorado bashing down there he said.

"They're stressing everything from the weather in Boulder to the fact that CU doesn't have baseball," he said.

Prominent Austin lobbyist and Baylor regent Buddy Jones is leading the pro-Baylor charge. Garrett calls Jones one of two or three "super-lobbyists" in the state.

"There is still time to change the scoreboard," an email from Jones obtained by the Dallas Morning News said. "We aren't through."



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In Boulder officials are declining opportunities to speak at length and on the record about the musical chair scenario.

Reached by email, CU Board of Regents Chair Steve Bosley did give us this statement: "CU Boulder is a committed member of the Big 12 Conference and we have not received an invitation to join any other conference. While there has been a lot of conjecture about conference membership, CU would have to have a great deal of discussion with our partners in the Big 12 and internally before making any decisions about what is in the best interests of the University."

The Pac-10 invited CU to join in 1994, but by a 6-3 vote, the CU Board of Regents at the time decided to decline the offer.

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Monday, June 7, 2010

Five things we learned at Big 12 meetings

By David Ubben
ESPN.com

There's been plenty of development and rumors since the Big 12 spring meetings closed on Friday afternoon, but taking that into account, here's what we learned during a contentious week.

1. So much for a secretive process. Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe kept his plans under wraps through the week and planned to do so moving forward. Not so much for the rest of the conference, who have anonymously leaked various details of the Big 12's plan to hold itself together, including [an "ultimatum" or drop-dead date of this Friday](#), or perhaps slightly longer. Neither Missouri nor Nebraska have confirmed the ultimatum, but with the Pac-10 speaking on the possibility of inviting any number of Big 12 teams, [the circumstances have changed](#).

2. The fate of the conference is in "a few hands." It would appear the hands with the most pull are Nebraska and Texas, but statements released by Iowa State, Kansas State and Baylor over the weekend make it clear the conference is far from a free-for-all. Should Nebraska, Missouri or Texas pledge commitment to the conference in the coming weeks, expect them to follow suit with a strongly worded statement, rather than a news conference that would subject schools administrators to questions.

3. Revenue is up. But not that up. The Big 12's conference revenue last year rose from \$130 million to \$139 million. It rose \$16.5 million from 2007-08 to 2008-09, but the Big 12 also placed two teams (Texas and Oklahoma) in BCS bowl games to help that jump. Most importantly, the gains by the Big 12 are dwarfed by recently announced numbers from the Big Ten and SEC. The Big Ten recently announced that the reported \$22 million number given to its schools was too high, but it still passed out a number closer to \$20 million, league officials said. The SEC just doled out over \$17 million to its members from a pool of \$209 million, up from \$132.5 million in 2008-09. The Big 12 is confident it could see a similar jump in the future, but first things first: There has to be a Big 12 for Big 12 revenue to exist. Though the Big 12 [will continue to distribute revenue unequally](#), individual team totals were not immediately made available.

4. Book your flights to Dallas, North fans. As expected, the [Big 12 announced its intention](#) to hold the 2011, 2012 and 2013 Big 12 championship games at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. Contract agreements still have to be negotiated by Beebe and stadium officials, and again, there has to be a Big 12 to host a Big 12 championship, but [Tom Osborne's preference](#) did little to sway the final decision. Beebe did say the game has not been anchored, but [his comments seem to indicate](#) doing so in the future is a possibility.

5. A possible merger with the Pac-10 is a reality. Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn's comments last Thursday to the [Boulder Daily Camera](#) made that obvious. "The longer that we were together in Kansas City it appeared that that rumor or speculation did have some validity to it," Bohn told the paper. That affected Thursday's meetings enough to cancel the day's news conference, and Pac-10 commissioner Larry Scott confirmed that of the four expansion possibilities the conference is considering, three involved Big 12 teams.

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