

Big 12, Pac-10 talk joint ventures

Alliance of conferences could lead to bigger TV deals in football

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Big 12 Conference athletic directors met with their Pacific-10 counterparts Wednesday and Thursday in Phoenix to discuss collaborating in a future sports landscape and possibly working together on television contracts.

Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe confirmed the meetings and called the exchange "very positive."

"It was an informal gathering," Beebe said. "We talked about how we might cooperate going forward."

The meeting could be seen as preparation for possible Big Ten expansion. The Big Ten announced in December that it was exploring adding members to its 11-team conference, and among those swirling in the speculation are Big 12 members Missouri and Nebraska.

The meetings in Phoenix were held as part of the Pac-10's annual gathering which included coaches, athletic officials, network TV officials and sponsors.

Last week, Pac-10 commissioner Larry Scott and Beebe agreed to bring the Big 12 athletic directors. Nine made the trip. Scheduling conflicts kept Kansas' Lew Perkins, Nebraska's Tom Osborne and Texas' DeLoss Dodds away.

Beebe said he and Scott had spoken informally about joint ventures since Scott took over the Pac-10 last year.

An alliance between the Big 12 and Pac-10 could strengthen their position in television negotiations. As the two BCS automatic-qualifier conferences west of the Mississippi River, their schools are located in or near six of the nation's top 13 media markets -- Los Angeles, Dallas, San Francisco, Houston, Seattle and Phoenix.

The Big 12 footprint includes 16 percent of the nation's households, the Pac-10 is 15 percent.

The Big 12 has football television contracts with ABC/ESPN that goes through 2016 and with Fox Sports Net through 2012. The league begins negotiations with Fox starting next spring.

The Pac-10 also has deals with ABC/ESPN and Fox through 2012 and is expected to begin negotiating new deals this year.

According to a source, a negotiating point for new deals could involve football games between the Pac-10 and Big 12.

In 2007, Big 12 schools delivered \$7 million to \$12 million and the Pac-10 \$7 million to \$11 million to each member through media contracts, according to the Sports Business Journal.

The conferences already are partners in basketball. Last week the leagues announced the matchups for the fourth Big 12/Pac-10 Hardwood Series.

The leagues also are partners in bowl games, traditionally in the Holiday Bowl and beginning this season in the Alamo Bowl.

There are other connections. Scott has filled his office with several administrators familiar with the Big 12 or the territory. Former Big 12 commissioner Kevin Weiberg is the Pac-10's deputy commissioner/chief operating officer.

Gloria Nevarez, formerly of Oklahoma, is the new senior associate commissioner, and Woodie Dixon is a former general counsel and salary-cap manager for the Chiefs.

Scott has said his conference is considering expansion -- Colorado has been speculated as a possible target--but only if it means more revenue per school.

The Big 12 will have its annual meetings next month in Kansas City.

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