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college football

Bufs likely to join L.A., Arizona schools in new Pac-12 division

By John Henderson
The Denver Post

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It appears the University of Colorado will like the news when the future of the expanded Pac-12 Conference is announced Thursday at the presidents' meetings in San Francisco. Momentum is headed toward these policies, according to multiple sources around the conference:

- Colorado and Utah will join the Arizona and Los Angeles schools — Southern California and UCLA — in a South Division, with the Bay Area schools joining the Oregon and Washington schools in a North Division.
- The league will have equal revenue sharing, after a threshold is met, with concessions to the Los Angeles schools. According to The Seattle Times, the presidents will approve a proposal giving USC and UCLA \$2 million more per year

than the other 10 schools until the broadcast revenues reach a certain level, at which point the 12 schools would divide revenues equally.

- The inaugural football championship game will be held in the stadium of the highest-seeded division champion.

While the decisions aren't yet firm, logistics point to Thursday's meetings being little more than a rubber stamp of negotiations that have been held over the past few weeks. The presidents meet in the morning, and Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott has set a late-morning news conference.

Word has begun to leak. Southern California athletic director Pat Haden recently told a booster group that the athletic directors voted 7-5 to forward a proposal for Colorado and Utah to join the South, the Times reported.

If the presidents ratify CU being in the South, it's good news for Colorado. Athletic director Mike Bohn made it clear when accepting the invitation last summer that joining the southern California schools, where Colorado has its largest out-of-state alumni base, was vital to the school's decision to join the Pac-12.

From the time Utah and Colorado accepted an invitation in June, Scott has leaned toward a divisional split based on geography

for easier branding. He also wanted competitive balance in football. With Oregon's emergence at No. 1 in the country and Stanford's rise to No. 12,



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New neighbors and rivals

The expected Pac-12 divisions:

South	North
Colorado	Washington
Utah	Washington St.
UCLA	Oregon
Southern Cal	Oregon State
Arizona	Cal
Arizona State	Stanford

the North and South will be fairly even from a competitive viewpoint.

Bohn said Tuesday that he had not heard which way the presidents were leaning, but he does believe equal revenue sharing is the best model for the Pac-12.

"When you look across the mosaic of intercollegiate athletic conferences across the country, the leagues that have the most stability and arguably the most parity and collective commitment — i.e., the Big Ten, the SEC, the ACC — it behooves us to find a formula that would allow us to emulate those types of models," Bohn said.

USC and UCLA, which normally get more TV appearances and thereby bring in more revenue to the conference, have voted in the past against equal revenue sharing. The compromise appears to be giving those two schools more money initially until revenues catch up to where Scott wants them.

The Pac-12 will begin negotiations shortly on

new TV contracts, and expectations are they will amount to between \$10.8 million to \$14.1 million per school per year. The league's current combined annual football and basketball TV revenues total only about \$53 million.

The L.A. schools are believed to be lobbying for a higher threshold before the league begins equal revenue sharing.

The site of the championship game has been a guessing game. Scott has said it's logistically difficult to run a championship game on less than a week's notice. It also creates an awkward scenario in which two teams might play each other two weeks in a row.

However, there is a greater possibility that a predetermined neutral site would not result in a capacity crowd, as Pac-12 fans don't historically travel well. The league may use the "NFL-style playoff" format for two or three years until the game builds popularity and then try to move it to a neutral site.

The negotiations are all but over. The final vote is Thursday when an expanded league sees its future.

Said Bohn, "These exercises are as exciting, challenging and fulfilling as any initiative I've been a part of in 25 years in this business."

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Pac-12 picture emerges

Revenue sharing eventually could be equal in new league

By Kyle Ringo Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Colorado celebrated a historic day in June when it announced its move from the Big 12 to the Pac-10, but that was just the beginning.

Colorado administrators, coaches, student-athletes and fans will have a much clearer picture of the future of the athletic department and its 14 sports programs after Thursday morning. That's when Pac-10 commissioner Larry Scott will hold a press conference in San Francisco to announce major decisions in areas such as revenue sharing, divisional alignments for football, plans for a football championship game and more.

There was a lot of hubbub, pomp and press surrounding Scott's visit to Boulder in June to make the Colorado-Pac-10 partnership official, but Thursday should be nearly as historic.

The league's 12 athletic directors working with Scott have laid the groundwork over the past three months for agreements and have forwarded their suggestions to chancellors and presidents, who will finalize the framework under which the league will begin operating next August.

Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn described the process he engaged in with his new partners as "the most exciting, challenging and fulfilling issue I've worked on in 25 years in the business." Nothing is stamped in stone yet, but based on conversations with multiple CU and Pac-10 sources and other media reports, a picture has emerged of what CU fans can expect to hear from Scott.

"Our chancellor fully understands all the different nuances associated with the different proposals and I'm looking forward to Thursday's announcement," Bohn said.

While talk of divisional alignments and annual access to fertile recruiting grounds in Southern California has dominated much of the media coverage, the most significant part of the equation is a deal for near equal revenue sharing at the outset and completely equal revenue sharing down the road.

The league is expected to announce that USC and UCLA, which have traditionally made more than their peers in television revenue because of their location in the Los Angeles market, will receive \$2 million more in revenue each year until the league's total revenue reaches a threshold of \$170 million. At that point, all schools would receive equal shares.

Some around the league believe it could be several years before the threshold is reached.

Others believe it will happen much sooner, maybe as soon as 2012.

The Big Ten and Southeastern Conference already generate more revenue and the Atlantic Coast Conference is approaching \$170 million per year with its new media rights deal, all of which sets up nicely as Scott begins media rights negotiations in early 2011.

Barring unforeseen last minute changes, Colorado and Utah, the new schools joining the conference, will be in a South Division along with Southern Cal, UCLA, Arizona and Arizona State.

The North Division will include California, Stanford, Oregon, Oregon State, Washington and Washington State.

Scott was a big proponent of both equal revenue sharing and separating the Los Angeles-area schools from the Bay Area schools to avoid the concentration of power in one division.

Call it a lesson learned from the Big 12, which allowed its south division to dominate the league, and, in part, led to

Colorado and Nebraska bolting for a more harmonious life elsewhere.

The California schools want to continue to play every year in football, which likely lead to a scheduling formula in which teams will play every team in their division every year and play teams in the other division on a rotating basis.

For instance, Colorado would play the Washington and Oregon schools two out of every three years while playing the Bay Area schools only once every three years.

Scott probably won't announce a schedule for the 2011 football season, but he could announce what teams will play with dates to follow later.

Colorado needs five home games in the conference schedule to fulfill its contractual obligation to suite holders for six homes games every year.

If the Buffs don't get five conference home games in 2011, Bohn might be forced to ask Colorado State to come to Boulder for one season to help the transition in league affiliation before returning the in-state series back to Denver in 2012.

CU is also negotiating for a non-conference home game in 2011 with an unspecified opponent.

The last major announcement expected from Scott on Thursday will be details of the future of the conference championship game in football. The conference is likely to choose to hold the 2011 championship game at the home site of the team with the best record.

That could be problematic if two teams finish with the same record and didn't play each other under the new scheduling formula. The window for negotiations to hold the game at a neutral site might be too small and having it a campus location in the first year would likely lead to a larger crowd.

It's possible the league could decide to permanently locate the game at a neutral site beginning in 2012 or 2013.

"The divisional lineup, the potential for revenue sharing and the specifics associated with championship sites impact our fans, they impact our alumni, they impact opportunities for our faculty to engage in colloquiums around the conference as a whole," Bohn said. "So it's a high-stakes process that is so exciting because as it comes together we have the ability to reap the benefits of why we made this historic move."

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