

BIG TEN CONFERENCE HISTORY

A meeting of seven Midwest university presidents on January 11, 1895, at the Palmer House in Chicago to discuss the regulation and control of intercollegiate athletics was the first development of what would become one of organized sports' most successful undertakings.

Those seven men, behind the leadership of James H. Smart, president of Purdue University, established the principles for which the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives, now known as the Big Ten Conference, would be founded.

At that meeting, a blueprint for the control and administration of college athletics under the direction of appointed faculty representatives was outlined. The presidents' first-known action "restricted eligibility for athletics to bonafide, full-time students who were not delinquent in their studies."

This helped limit some problems of the times, especially the participation of professional athletes and "non-students" in regular sporting events. That important legislation, along with other legislation that would follow in the coming years, served as the primary building block for amateur intercollegiate athletics.

On February 8, 1896, one faculty member from each of those seven universities met at the same Palmer House and officially established the mechanics of the "Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives" or "Western Conference."

Those seven universities were the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Purdue University and University of Wisconsin. Indiana University and the State University of Iowa were admitted in 1899. Michigan temporarily withdrew from the conference in 1908 and Ohio State University joined in 1912. When Michigan resumed membership in 1917, the league was first referred to as the "Big Ten Conference," which became the organization's official name when the conference was incorporated in 1987. Chicago withdrew in 1946 and Michigan State College (now Michigan State University) was added three years later in 1949.

After a 40-year period of constancy in membership, the conference expanded to 11 members for the first time. On June 4, 1990, the Council of Presidents voted to confirm its earlier decision to integrate Pennsylvania State University into the conference.

On June 11, 2010, the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors approved a formal membership application by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, expanding the conference to 12 institutions, effective for the 2011-12 academic year.

As the 1900s opened, faculty representatives established rules for intercollegiate athletics that were novel for the time. As early as 1906, the faculty approved legislation that required eligible athletes to meet entrance requirements and to have completed a full year's work, along with having one year of residence. Both freshmen and graduate students were not permitted to compete, training tables (or quarters) were forbidden and coaches were to be appointed by university bodies "at modest salaries."

Football and baseball were the popular sports prior to 1900. Wisconsin won the first two football championships and Chicago claimed the first three baseball titles. The first "official" sponsored championship was in outdoor track. It was held at the University of Chicago in 1906 with Michigan earning the title.

Since 1906, there have been many different athletic events popularized on Big Ten campuses. Some became extremely popular—football and basketball, for example. Others, like boxing, fell by the wayside. Today, the Big Ten sponsors 25 championships, 12 for men and 13 for women.

The office of the commissioner of athletics was created in 1922 "to study athletic problems of the various Western Conference universities and assist in enforcing the eligibility rules which govern Big Ten athletics." Major John L. Griffith was appointed as the first commissioner and served in that position until his death in 1944. Kenneth L. "Tug" Wilson, former director of athletics at Northwestern, served from 1944 until he retired in 1961. Bill Reed, an assistant commissioner since 1951, succeeded Wilson until his death in 1971. Wayne Duke became the fourth Big Ten commissioner in 1971 and retired June 30, 1989. Duke was succeeded by James E. Delany on July 1, 1989. Delany came to the Big Ten following 10 years as Ohio Valley Conference Commissioner.



Delany is only the fifth commissioner in the history of the Big Ten. He oversees the operation of the Big Ten Conference office and its staff, housed at the Big Ten Conference office headquarters and meetings center in Park Ridge, Illinois. The conference's first fully owned and operated building is located 10 minutes from O'Hare Airport and has been designed to fully service the needs of over 60 different committees, coaches and governance groups from the conference that hold more than 125 meeting days per year.

Under Delany's guidance, the Big Ten Conference launched the Big Ten Network on August 30, 2007, marking the first national conference-owned television network. The Big Ten Network made history by becoming the first network to be available in 30 million homes within its first 30 days on air. After three years of operation, the network was available to up to 75 million homes across North America and on cable in 19 of America's top 20 media markets

Delany and his staff manage over 850 broadcast events, provide legislative and compliance services, manage 25 different sport championships and tournaments, provide staff services to over 400 coaching and administrative personnel on Big Ten campuses, and service the media's and fans' needs and interests for information about the Big Ten Conference.

NATIONAL TEAM TITLES FOR BIG TEN SCHOOLS IN LAST 10 YEARS

2009-10

Fencing (Penn State)
Women's Golf (Purdue)
Men's Gymnastics (Michigan)
Synchronized Swimming (Ohio State)
Women's Volleyball (Penn State)
Wrestling (Iowa)

2008-09

Fencing (Penn State)
Women's Ice Hockey (Wisconsin)
Women's Lacrosse (Northwestern)
Synchronized Swimming (Ohio State)
Women's Volleyball (Penn State)
Wrestling (Iowa)

2007-08

Fencing (Ohio State)
Women's Lacrosse (Northwestern)
Men's Volleyball (Penn State)
Women's Volleyball (Penn State)
Wrestling (Iowa)

2006-07

Fencing (Penn State)
Men's Gymnastics (Penn State)
Men's Ice Hockey (Michigan State)
Women's Ice Hockey (Wisconsin)
Women's Lacrosse (Northwestern)
Men's Indoor Track and Field (Wisconsin)
Wrestling (Minnesota)

2005-06

Men's Cross Country (Wisconsin)
Men's Ice Hockey (Wisconsin)
Women's Ice Hockey (Wisconsin)
Women's Lacrosse (Northwestern)

2004-05

Women's Ice Hockey (Minnesota)
Women's Lacrosse (Northwestern)
Men's Soccer (Indiana)
Women's Softball (Michigan)

2003-04

Fencing (Ohio State)
Men's Gymnastics (Penn State)
Women's Ice Hockey (Minnesota)
Men's Soccer (Indiana)
Synchronized Swimming (Ohio State)

2002-03

Football (Ohio State)
Men's Ice Hockey (Minnesota)
Men's Tennis (Illinois)

2001-02

Fencing (Penn State)
Field Hockey (Michigan)
Men's Golf (Minnesota)
Men's Ice Hockey (Minnesota)
Wrestling (Minnesota)

2000-01

Men's Gymnastics (Ohio State)
Wrestling (Minnesota)