

July 24, 2008



An Interview With:

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: Thank you. Just a couple comments. I have been here for 20 years and this is the worst flu I've had in 20 years, so hang in there with me. I'm perspiring and sort of having trouble with cooling and heating today.

Before I look forward, I'd like to look backwards just a little bit. In particular, recognizing two of my colleagues who announced this will be their last year as conference commissioners, Mike Tranchese and Tom Hansen, both good friends and colleagues. Tom has devoted 25 years of his life to the Pac-10 and Mike has been in the Big East for 30 years. So when you think about what they've seen and what they've experienced, and while we've disagreed from time-to-time, we've agreed an awful lot, and always had sort of a wonderful relationship. So I'm really pleased that I'm going to be with them as they move forward and I just wanted to recognize all that they've contributed not only to their own conferences, but to intercollegiate athletics.

In that vein, I think it's also appropriate to note that this event was created in the early 70's by Wayne Duke, and while we're in our 113th year of Big Ten football, I believe we now have 38 or 39 Kickoff Luncheons, and I think it's one of the preeminent media events for our teams and our universities and our coaches, and I'm always happy to participate in it and celebrate the introduction of the season.

Just sort of going forward, I think that the BCS was the big story this year, and obviously we'll enter into negotiations late summer, early fall. John Swofford will lead those negotiations. We'll support him. There's tremendous interest in this property. While it's a controversial property, there's no doubt in my mind that the BCS has injected a life into the postseason that wasn't there

prior to it and has given great impetus to the regular season. And when you think about the fact that Boise State and Hawai'i and many other universities that haven't played on the, quote unquote, the big stage, have had that opportunity through the BCS. I think it has really increased the number of teams that the American public is pursuing and its made games that were regional or local in nature have national implications.

I know from the Big Ten perspective with the Rose Bowl on the line, the BCS championship on the line and a variety of New Year's Day games, seems like every week counts, every game counts. Our fans react in a positive way. We passed the 5,000,000 mark last year for the third year in a row and for the fifth overall we have the top three teams in attendance in the country and we sold out 42 or 43 games, which was a record for us. So we think that the fans talk, the viewers are talking, we had so many games that were nationally televised.

One of the things I think that people miss and so much conversation about the Big Ten Network last year, they really missed one of the changes that occurred in our ABC relationship, because in 2006 we had two national games on ABC of the 14 or 15 that were telecast. Last year we had 14, because all of the regional games have an external window on ESPN or ESPN2, so that was 12 national games and then in the prime time I think two of the three or two of the four games were national. So along with the Big Ten Network and ESPN, all of those ABC games are now truly available to American sports fans across the country. And I think that's important and significant and perhaps we didn't highlight it enough, but I think it's a very interesting and positive facet in our television agreements.

I think that when you look at any particular season, whether it's this season or last season, the season before, there's a natural effort, natural interest in finding out who is the best team, and last year we found that out in the fact that LSU in New Orleans defeated Ohio State in a very clear and decisive way. And the year before Ohio State



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was defeated by Florida. And we've played some great Southern Cal teams in the Rose Bowl. So while I recognize those outcomes, I'm really pleased we can play the very best. And in the last two years, we really haven't defeated them.

When I look at the health of these programs over time, I'm reminded that between the Alliance and the BCS games we've won 15 and lost 11 and before that four-game losing streak we were 15-7. And we're playing the best of the best out of the SEC, whether it's Florida or Tennessee or LSU, Southern Cal out at the Rose Bowl, Texas A&M or Texas out of the Big 12. So I think we want to play the big games on the big stage and sometimes you just get whipped, and we did. And so I think you have to kind of nuzzle up to that and sort of accept it. But what I don't like to do is take it further than you should.

A lot of people would have loved to beat Buffalo. They played in four Super Bowls, they didn't win one. Dean Smith played in 15 Final Four games and won two. So greatness occurs over time. Quality occurs over time. Championships won in a single year. And so we just hope that we're putting teams on the field that are capable of competing at the highest level.

And I know this year Ohio State is looking forward to an aggressive schedule playing at Southern Cal. Illinois has got some real challenges and they have a lot of young talent. Wisconsin played a great Tennessee team last year and they have 17 starters back. We've had eight different teams win or share a Big Ten Championship. It has been great for the Big Ten. Hope is alive. People are coaching and recruiting and doing things, doing things very well.

So I think overall, from a media perspective and from a fan's perspective and from the bowl situation, we feel real good about where we are. I think reestablishing the Rose Bowl within the BCS has been very important to the conference and we appreciate working with the other conference commissioners.

Now, the last thing I would mention about the BCS, you know, I really do think it became the story du jour, but the Big Ten and the Pac-10 were the only two that were focused on keeping the BCS exactly the way that it was. And I had a sense, although each conference commissioner communicates with his constituents in a different way, I had a pretty heartfelt sense that that wasn't true. None of us had really agreed to open up the discussion for a wider format. And when it really came down to it, we had two days of discussion

and five of us had no interest in it, based on talking to our coaches, our ADs and our presidents, and two of us did, but even the two that did weren't committed to the concept, simply to look at it. So I think that going forward there's a very strong consensus among the presidents and commissioners that the format we have is working quite well. Certainly ABC and ESPN are interested in getting back into the game on a more broad scale, and FOX has been very excited about the product and about the ratings.

And I was in New York last week with some baseball executives and some NFL executives and on two separate occasions people were talking about media assets in two separate conversations, not that the BCS is the Super Bowl, but in terms of an event's ability to deliver double-digit ratings, the BCS can do that in a way that NBA championships sometimes have difficulty and baseball has difficulty. So I think that what it really says is that there's a passion for football, professional and college in this country, and that the BCS has captured its fair share of attention and the networks have recognized that.

So those are some sort of generic comments, and let me stop here and open up for any questions you might have.

Q. You've tried to get ahead of the game in several ways, most recently with Comcast and most recently with the Big Ten Network with the BCS. What are the things that you're looking ahead to try to get ahead of now?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: Well, we've made some progress with the Big Ten Network. Last year I stood here and we were in 17 million homes and we had 40 distribution deals. Today we have both satellite companies, we have both telephone companies and we have 240 distribution deals. We have the largest distributor in the country, but our job is not finished. We're only in about seven out of 10 homes in the Midwest. We're having discussions and negotiations with the other major carriers and we're just going to continue to negotiate and try to move forward.

And so, you know, I don't really have anything on my agenda. There's no expansion on the horizon. I know I'll sort of preempt that question. I think that's come up in 19 of the 20 years. The only year it didn't come up was the



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year before it happened with Penn State. But I don't expect that we'll be expanding any time soon.

You know, I'm working hard with our coaches. They have great legacies. When you really think about the Hayden Frys and the Randy Walkers and the Coach Alvarezes and the Joe Tillers and the Lloyd Carrs, they've passed along some pretty healthy football programs, pretty balanced football programs, pretty competitive football programs, programs people can be proud of. We have seven or eight new coaches over the last four years, I don't know exactly the number, but they've got a tremendous competitive challenge, but they also have a challenge to continue these programs in a balanced and competitive way, because certainly the people in front of them have done a tremendous job.

Q. When you talked about five conferences -- when you were meeting with the BCS, five conferences having no interest in expansion of the system and two that were willing to look at it but not commit, that's seven, is that the six major conferences and Notre Dame?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: Yes.

Q. And then can we take from that that the conversation as to whether or not to look at it was rather brief?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I'll try to put it in terms of time. I think it was a couple of hours. I think there was an opportunity for presentation by Mike and John. I think they had, you know, made a really nice presentation of the pros and the cons, and so they had not just come in and said we want to look at it, they came in and tried to lay it out. But we spent a couple of hours in detail going over the presentation. Two hours is not brief to me, but two hours.

Q. Joe Paterno is now the most senior tenured coach for football in the Big Ten. It wasn't so long ago he was the new guy. What has he meant to the league as far as prestige and image? What has he brought to the league in the 15 or 20 years you've been commissioner?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: An iconic winner, an iconic sportsman, an iconic educator. I think that when the history of all of this is written, I'm going to have had the privilege of playing for one and working with another, two of the great coaches in history of intercollegiate athletics in



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Dean Smith and Joe Paterno, and that's how much I think of Joe Paterno.

Q. Rich Rodriguez was in here talking about what a tumultuous seven months or so it has been. What was your reaction to some of the headlines and some of what's gone on at Michigan since he's taken over?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: You have to give me some specificity. Are you talking about the buyout?

Q. The lawsuit and the offensive lineman transfer to Ohio State?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: Well, when anybody transfers from Ohio State to Michigan or Michigan to Ohio State, it's news. It is what it is.

In terms of the buyout, the fact that it was settled at par value would indicate to me that, you know, West Virginia got what West Virginia wanted. Michigan wanted to move on with their football program and their coach. And it's noisy. I don't think it was good for Rich. I don't think it was good for anybody. I don't think it was good for West Virginia, but they asserted their position on it. They had the right to do that.

In college football and basketball in general the rules of contract law apply as they relate to personnel, but to be honest with you, they're observed in the breach as much as they're observed in actuality. People are talking to people all the time. People are getting buyouts. People are settling claims. It's not the healthiest environment because coaches have responsibility to players, universities have responsibility to coaches. And it's just a pretty difficult environment. I think anybody who covers the sports, the two major sports, recognizes that and so it's not a great situation, it's not one that anybody feels great about, but it's behind us now, so we'll try to move forward.

Q. Jim, what is your reaction to some of the -- it's been kind of a tough offseason off the field for a lot of the Big Ten teams. What's your reaction to some of the incidents? And two, is there any sort of thought toward a code of conduct for Big Ten athletes?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: We have high expectations. And to be honest with you, I think everyone who has kids has high expectations

for kids and coaches have high expectations for their players. And there's real disappointment when activities occur that, you know, allege serious problems, either with student code or criminal code or civil code. I think the difficulty is that these are very young people who happen to be public figures and they're going to be covered like public figures. A football player in Iowa is going to be covered like a 40-year-old politician in Iowa. It's not easy because the individual deserves due process, presumption of innocence. The university has a student code. The criminal law is applicable and team discipline is also there. In order to get all those moving parts in an appropriate sort of balanced setup is not easy.

And, I mean, I think you can look at the Duke rape case, alleged rape case, and it was a classic case of, you know, a rush to judgment not only by prosecutors, but by the public. I think we all ought to have a lesson embedded in it for all of us, which is let the thing play out. It's never good to have a pattern of these things because you lose the confidence of people around you when you do.

We have had incidences, more than we would like to have. I communicate with the kids. I write to them every year, speak to them when I have an opportunity. I know our athletic directors and presidents have it high on their priority to socialize and acculturate the students to the college campus and yet from time to time there's a failing there. And so the only thing I can say is that I'm aware of those situations. I shouldn't comment on them because they haven't run their course and the individuals I think deserve the right to the presumption of innocence. I think that's part of the system. It's part of the system that they're public figures and they're going to get covered, and it's also part of the system that they get the benefit of the doubt until the thing reaches a conclusion.

Q. If you would talk to us a little bit about the move to end the season on Thanksgiving weekend when many of the coaches over the years have talked about the desire to be able send kids home, and if it's determined, how far out is the conference committed to finishing out Thanksgiving weekend?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: That's a good question and I think the coaches, to be honest with you, have moved on it. Of course, when you say the coaches, we had a different group of coaches five years ago than we did in a meeting room two years ago and we'll probably -- I

don't know what the mix will be. But when we went to 12 games -- and to be honest with you, that wasn't a coaches' call, that was a call that was inspired by commissioners, athletic directors, presidents who are trying to support these broad-based programs. They went along with it, but it wasn't their number one priority. They thought at the time that they could work in 12 consecutive weeks, they could live with that. But after experiencing for two years, the majority of the coaches -- more than the majority, the super majority of the coaches said we would rather have a bye and play after Thanksgiving than play consecutively and we really couldn't open up the season early and have sort of a flexible approach because we have to have someone to play against and the other conferences play championship games and play after Thanksgiving and we were sort of the unique group that ended a week early. So I think it's sort of a compromising 12 game after a couple years of experience.

I think in the past when we had the 11-game schedule, it was like two or three times every 15 years that it happened naturally. And I think going forward we have the bye this year, we don't in '09 and in '10 we have it again. And then going forward I think indefinitely, as far as we have schedules, it will be after Thanksgiving. I don't know how long those schedules are out. I don't know if it's four or eight years out. Mark Rudner would know.

Q. Talk a little bit about the rule changes, particularly the 40-second clock and the ban on the signals, the --

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I'm a bad person to talk about rules really. You should talk to Dave Parry about that. I'm a basketball guy. I love football, but I shouldn't be talking about the rule changes because I don't know enough to be right.

Q. What's your reaction, if any, to the allegations that Iowa and Iowa's administration helped to hide allegations of the sexual assault case?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I don't have any of the details on it. I've read that there's a controversy about it and the position I often take is, number one, that while the coverage is appropriate from a media perspective, it's interesting, it's a hot story, there ought to be a presumption of innocence.

And I'll tell you, Kirk Ferentz is one of the finest people, forget about coaches, and Sally Mason, Gary Barta, these people, in my view, their values, their judgment, their integrity is at a high level. So not only do they get the presumption of innocence, they get the presumption of support because of the kind of people they are. They're people I've worked with on a regular basis. So while I understand the allegation, you have to understand my belief in them is at a pretty high level. I've been working with Kirk for quite a while, Gary and Sally less so, but nevertheless, they are impressive people.

Q. From time to time you'll see stories about the number of minority head coaches in Bowl Championship Division football and I believe over the last 15 to 20 years there's only been one, maybe two minority coaches in the Big Ten. The NFL has the Rooney Rule. Is it time for something like that in major college football?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I haven't given that a lot of thought. I don't know what our numbers are. I won't debate it. We had Francis, we had Bobby. That may be it. I can't think off the top of my head, but I think it may be something to consider. I wouldn't be opposed to talking about it. We spend a good bit of resources and a good bit of time on this subject.

The six major conferences have been bringing 18 African-American football coaches, 18 athletic directors, six conference commissioners and search folks together for three years now, the goal being at the end of six years there will be 100 African-American coaches who know 100 athletic directors and more. I think we've got to reach out. I think we've got to open up. And I would not be opposed to thinking that -- I'm not sure the Rooney Rule, per se, fits with colleges, but if there's something in principal that might, I think it would be worth thinking about.

Q. Getting back to the BCS and the playoff issue. As commissioners you guys have to do your jobs in dealing with TV contracts and that, but as far as the fans' perception and this growing movement behind the playoff, do you pay attention to that or do you have a responsibility to that?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I think do we have a responsibility to consider it. I know that my address is well known. I get lots of communications on the subject. I read them all,

but I think also we have responsibilities to our schools and to our athletes and to our teams and to the bowl system, so I think there are a variety of inputs that are necessary. I will tell you this: that in many, many ways the college football fan votes with their feet by going to the games, the college football fan votes by watching the games, and I think they're voting fairly affirmatively for what we have.

I think that the reason that the commissioners at the end of the day came to the conclusion they came to is two-fold: One, I think they believe that any sort of elongated playoff that pushes into the second semester or occurs during exams would run into major kinds of issues with presidents. And there's, I think, pretty much unanimity that once you go to a four-team playoff, which plus one is, it's a four-team playoff, you can call it a plus-one, plus-two, plus-three, a plus-22, it's a four-team playoff, and once you go to a four-team playoff, that means in last year's circumstances Georgia and USC are not included. That would take about 18 months to be able to make the playoff based on political pressures and other things. Who should get them; six conference champions? If you don't give it to conference champions, then you've really relegated your championship to the -- if you give it to all conferences, then you're at 10 automatic qualifiers. And I've seen in the basketball tournament for 25, 35 years, the automatic bid is the most important thing to a tournament. So I think very quickly we would be at a 16-game playoff. I think the slippery slope argument is there and I think then you start looking at the regular season as sort of a method of determining seeding and access. It's no longer about championships, it's no longer about what it is in the southeast and what it is in the Big Ten and what it is in the Pac-10.

There's no doubt. I mean, we can debate a lot about the BCS and reasonable people can and do disagree, but you can't help but conclude that the BCS's impact on the regular season and on the postseason over the last decade has been incredibly positive from an attendance perspective. We've got CBS involved, we have NBC involved, we have FOX involved, we have ABC involved, we have wall-to-wall, and we have regional games with national impact every weekend.

So I don't think the sport has ever been healthier. We have parity and we also have classic programs, so I think it's in pretty good shape.



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Q. If there's difficulty on college campuses, could a possible return of athletic dormitories help that situation?

COMMISSIONER JIM DELANY: I haven't really given that much thought. I mean, I think that we've got to be careful, you know, in recruiting. I think we have to be careful in socializing the individual to the campus. I think the person has a lot of individual responsibility and I think we have a lot of responsibility to bring that person along from a young man to a man's status. And I don't consider the athletic dormitory to be one of the answers, but I have not given it a lot of thought.

Thank you.

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