



Craig Thompson, Commissioner

**** Sent Electronically ****

December 13, 2011

Scott Cowen – President, Tulane University
Judy Genshaft – President, University of South Florida
Rev. John Jenkins – President, University of Notre Dame
Duane Nellis – President, University of Idaho
Max Nikias – President, University of Southern California
Harvey Perlman – Chancellor, University of Nebraska
John Peters – President, Northern Illinois University
Bill Powers – President, University of Texas
Gary Ransdell – President, Western Kentucky University
David Schmidly – President, University of New Mexico
Charles Steger – President, Virginia Tech
Robert Witt – President, University of Alabama

Dear Members of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) Presidential Oversight Committee:

Pursuant to Section 5 in Exhibit A (page A-6) of the current Bowl Championship Series (BCS) agreement and Section 5 in Schedule C (page C-6) of the Amendment to Rights Agreement Related to Bowl Championship Series (BCS), the Mountain West Conference (MW) requests the Committee grant the prescribed exemption whereby the Conference will receive an automatic berth for its champion to participate in a BCS game following the 2012 and 2013 football seasons. The Mountain West has met the requirements over the four-year evaluation period (2008-2011) to seek an exemption as follows, per Sections 5(a) and 5(b) which outline the contractual threshold:

- i. The MW is among the top five conferences in Average Ranking of Highest-Ranked Team, finishing in the **4th** position.
- ii. The MW is no lower than seventh in Average Conference Ranking, finishing in the **7th** position.
- iii. The MW has an Average Adjusted Top 25 Performance Ranking equal to or greater than 33.33% of the conference with the highest Average Adjusted Top 25 Performance Ranking, finishing with a figure of **60.19%** (**5th** position).

Two important factors are at the core of the Committee's consideration of this request for an exemption – precedent and performance. The BCS has a well-established history of granting automatic qualification exemptions. Equally important, the performance of the Mountain West during the evaluation period has clearly been deserving of automatic-qualifying status.

In February 2004, prior to the implementation of the BCS contract established for the 2004-2007 cycle, the Big East Conference (Big East) experienced membership change which significantly affected the competitive strength of its football enterprise. However, without any formal action, the Big East was permitted to retain its automatic-qualifying status for the next cycle – apparently based upon reputation and relationships, rather than demonstrated performance.

In December 2007, at the conclusion of the 2004-2007 cycle, the Big East Conference finished sixth (6th) in the Average Ranking of Highest-Ranked Team, sixth (6th) in Average Conference Ranking, but below the 50% threshold (49.11%) in the Adjusted Top 25 Performance Ranking necessary to retain its automatic qualification position. The Big East “requested continuation of its annual automatic berth under the exemption provisions set forth in the standards”. The BCS Presidential Oversight Committee approved the request, thus granting the Big East automatic qualification for the BCS bowl games of January 2009 and January 2010.

In September 2008, the BCS Group of 12 made a determination that “based on Fox’s request, comments from the bowls and considerations of what is best for the BCS arrangement as a whole, the Big East champion would have an annual automatic berth by contract through the games played in January 2014”. This action effectively extended the Big East’s AQ status for four more years, without any consideration of on-field performance.

Clearly, the BCS has established a precedent on three separate occasions. It is only appropriate the Mountain West’s exemption request be considered in that context and a consistency of approach be maintained. This is particularly true when the MW would be granted automatic qualification for only two years, while the Big East was previously granted access for a total 10 years by actions of the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee and/or BCS Group of 12.

The Mountain West’s demonstrated on-field and marketplace performance fully illustrates the MW is deserving of the requested exemption. These accomplishments are perhaps best reviewed within the framework of “Matters to Be Considered by the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee in Making Exemption Determinations”, as outlined in Section 6 of both the BCS Agreement and the Amendment to the Rights Agreement.

(a) *The overall strength of the Conference when compared to other Conferences as determined by Average Conference Ranking.*

- The MW ranked 7th in the final Average Conference Ranking component of the just-concluded four-year evaluation cycle (2008-2011). The MW ranked 4th in Average Ranking of the Highest-Ranked Team, which placed it ahead of three conferences currently enjoying AQ status (ACC, Big East, Big 10). The MW’s Adjusted Top 25 Performance Percentage of 60.19% was far superior to those of the ACC (37.04%) and the Big East (32.41%).
- It should be noted that both the ACC and the Big East would fall short of the threshold to retain their automatic qualification status after this just-concluded four-year evaluation cycle (2008-2011) if they were to be evaluated against these same standards. In fact, the Big East’s numbers are insufficient to even qualify to request an exemption.
- As another method of comparison, the MW has had eight (8) teams ranked in the Top 25 of the final BCS standings during the just-concluded four-year evaluation period (2008-2011). This compares to seven (7) teams ranked in the Top 25 for the Big East.

(b) *Whether the Bowl Championship Series would be substantially more attractive to media entities, the Bowls, the Rose Bowl, and the fans of college football if the champion of such Conference has an annual automatic berth in a Bowl Championship Series Game.*

- MW member institutions have participated in BCS games on four occasions. The television ratings for those appearances surpassed those for the games involving the ACC participant three times, the Big East participant twice and the participants from the Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 and SEC once each. Obviously, the MW champion is attractive to the various constituents of the Bowl Championship Series.

- MW teams counted for the just-completed cycle (2008-2011) finished in the Top 10 of the final BCS standings on six (6) occasions during the four-year period, and in three (3) of those instances were left out of a BCS game. All interests would be better served if such highly-ranked and attractive teams would be guaranteed to participate in a Bowl Championship Series Game.
- (c) *The willingness and ability of the Members Institutions of such Conference on an annual basis to meet the ticket purchase obligations and other obligations of teams participating in one of the Bowl Games.*
- MW member institutions have made four appearances in BCS bowl games, including three consecutive years (2009-2011) prior to this year's selections, and in each case have exceeded all obligations.
 - MW teams participating in BCS bowl games sold an average of 21,521 tickets for those appearances, in some instances exceeding the ticket sales totals of current AQ conference participants.
- (d) *The number of times that a member of such Conference has won a national championship or has played in a Post-Season College Football Game that decided the national championship or had a direct impact on the national championship.*
- MW member institutions counted for the just-completed cycle (2008-2011) ranked in the top six of the final BCS rankings on three (3) occasions, thus impacting the national championship equation.
 - By contrast, current AQ conference Big East had only one team finish among top six, while the ACC had none.
- (e) *The number of Conferences whose Conference Champions have annual automatic berths in the Bowl Games and the Rose Bowl either by (i) a contract between one or more Conferences and one or more Bowls or the Rose Bowl or (ii) earning an annual automatic berth in a Bowl Championship Series Game under the terms of Section 4.*
- That number remains at six, as it has since the establishment of the current system.
- (f) *The number of At-Large Slots that will exist if the Conference in question is granted an exemption.*
- With a seventh automatic-qualifier (which would not exceed the maximum number of automatic berths specified in Section 7 of both the BCS Agreement and the Amendment to the Rights Agreement), a total of three at-large slots would remain – subject to other automatic qualification contingencies (e.g., Notre Dame, Top 3 or 4, etc.) which may impact their availability.
- (g) *Whether the Bowl Championship Series arrangement can accommodate an additional annual automatic berth for such Conference Champion consistent with the provisions of Section 7 of this Exhibit A.*
- The answer is yes. An annual automatic berth for the Mountain West would not exceed the maximum number of automatic berths specified in Section 7.
- (h) *Any contracts, agreements, or other binding arrangements or commitments between any Conference and any other person, including, without limitation, any television network, sponsor, or Post-Season College Football Game that might be affected by the decision of the BCS Presidential Oversight Committee.*
- The Mountain West is not aware of any such encumbrances.

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An objective evaluation of the prior BCS practice of conferring exemptions and of the performance metrics established by the MW during the evaluation period leads to an unmistakable conclusion. It is appropriate the Mountain West Conference be granted an exemption providing its champion automatic qualification into the 2013 and 2014 BCS Bowl Games.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Craig Thompson
Commissioner

CT:bg

Cc:

Britton Banowsky – Commissioner, Conference USA
Karl Benson – Western Athletic Conference
Jim Delany – Commissioner, Big Ten Conference
John Marinatto – Commissioner, Big East Conference
Chuck Neinas – Commissioner, Big 12 Conference
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