

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: Texas vs Oklahoma State

Saturday, December 2, 2023

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

Brett Yormark

Commissioner Press Conference

BRETT YORMARK: I'm going to start off with comments, and as Bob said, we'll jump into any Q&A you'd like.

First, thank you for your coverage of the Big 12 this year. It's been great. It's been fair. It's been appropriate. We appreciate your passion and what you do for the conference.

Obviously a congratulations to both Texas and Oklahoma State. Both have had an incredible season.

I was telling Coach Sarkisian a couple minutes ago, we start out on -- everybody wants to end up here. Unfortunately, only two can. The two that rose to the top are here. I'm excited about the game. I think we're in for a great event.

If Texas wins, they certainly deserve consideration for a spot in the playoffs, no question about it. They've had a great season. We'll strongly support them in any way we can should they win today's game.

If Oklahoma State wins, obviously it shows the fight that this team has had all season, the resiliency certainly over the last couple of weeks. Again, we should have an incredible game here today.

On the whole, I think we've had great parity throughout the conference this year. We headed into the final week of the season with seven teams, half the league, mathematically in contention for one of the two spots in our championship game. So that certainly speaks to the parity of this conference from top to bottom.

For the first time since 2012, the conference will be sending nine teams to bowl games, again, reinforcing the parity and strength of this conference.

Seven different teams have played in the Big 12



Championship Game over the last four seasons, Oklahoma State is the only program to make two appearances during that span. Certainly we welcome them back.

League-wide, Big 12 teams averaged 88 percent of stadium capacity. So the fans certainly voted yes throughout the season, for games on campus, for the excitement this Big 12 franchise delivers. That was nine percentage points of ahead of last year.

Besides a great game today, we've got a lot in store. As many of you know, I come from a bit of a marketing background. As much as the game is all about what unfolds on the field, there's a lot of different things around it today. This game will be streamed in Times Square, which is fantastic, really happy about that. It's an important market for us. That hopefully will be an annual event. This game will be seen in 144 countries, thanks to our partnership with ABC and ESPN.

On the field, we'll have a great halftime show with Nelly, certainly something I aspire to do, something akin to what you see in the Super Bowl, and the exciting thing is he's going to be joined on the field by our school bands, which makes it very, very special. We'll also have a National Anthem, no different than last year.

Our partnership with WWE, I think, is a big differentiator for us. They have 150 million social media followers. We'll engage with those fans throughout, and many obviously will tune in.

Should be a spectacular game, spectacular show. I want to thank again AT&T Stadium. I don't think there's a better venue in the country to be hosting our premier event. Last year we extended our agreement through '31 and glad we did.

On the heels of that, I'll open it up for some questions, but again thank you for all you do.

Q. Texas has been here 30 years. Can you share the impact that Texas has had on the conference and just college football in general?

BRETT YORMARK: Legacy program, historic program. Big part of the history of who we are, not just today, but also in the future. Just to put it behind us, I love the Texas team. I'm great friends with the coach, the president, the AD. I wish them all well today. As I said in media day, they are a big part of the history of this conference and always will be.

It's a nice way to kind of finish your time here, being at the championship game, and I wish them all well this morning. Thank you for your question.

Q. Austin had some fun with you last week when you were down there. What did you learn from kind of the comments you made at the Tech thing in the summer, and also any part of you rooting for Texas just for what it would mean for the Big 12 and the possible CFP berth?

BRETT YORMARK: A couple of things. I never go backwards. I never look back. I enjoyed my time in Austin. The fans are great. One thing I love about college sports, because I've only been in it 16 months, love the passion. We shared something very much in common. I have a lot of passion for what I do.

I'm rooting for both teams today. We've got two great teams that represent the Big 12, rooting for them both. Thank you for your question.

Q. A lot of talk about the future of conference title games going forward in the 12-team playoff formality. What's your stance on their relevance and whether they need to remain? What do you say?

BRETT YORMARK: Hugely relevant for us. This is the tentpole event. Everything leads up to this moment. It creates a wonderful narrative for this conference. It's a showcase event and something I'm committed to.

I know there's been a lot of discussion amongst the commissioners about what that might look like, but it relates to the Big 12, we love this game, we love being at AT&T. Our fans love it. It's a great experience for our student-athletes, just had that conversation with Coach Sarkisian.

For me, it's a tentpole event. It lets the world know who we are and where we're going, and it's a wonderful narrative for us.

Q. What did you learn about the tiebreaker rules, especially with 16 teams next year and moving forward?

BRETT YORMARK: I know there was a lot of talk about that, but it was always about head-to-head competition and then common opponents. Our head of football, Scott Draper, does an incredible job. We are consistent throughout the season. That's all I have to say about it.

Q. Looking at the football schedule over the next four years, can you talk about the rationale of eight teams having a protected rivalry game and eight teams not having a protected rivalry game?

BRETT YORMARK: Scott Draper led the charge on our scheduling. We created a committee of ADs, all weighed in on what that would look like. We think we landed in a wonderful spot. I'm very pleased with it. It was a collaborative effort. We'll see how it unfolds, but I think it's exactly where we needed to land.

Q. You were bullish on adding the Houston market to this league, wondering what the early returns are, maybe just gauge the enthusiasm. Also, the unique opportunity for the National Championship Game to be within the Big 12 footprint. Does the conference have any plans for engagement with the CFP?

BRETT YORMARK: We love Houston, No. 8 market in the country, an important market obviously. Our first year in it, we engaged, I think, pretty effectively with the National Championship Game there. We're excited to see if we can kind of engage in all the right ways to give ourselves the right narrative in that moment.

But it's an enormously important part of our footprint and one that we're going to take more advantage of moving forward. And thank you for being here.

Q. Brett, with Oklahoma State being in this game two out of the last three years, I'm curious what you think of them as maybe a standard bearer of this conference going forward.

BRETT YORMARK: They're a big part of our past and part of our future, great program. I was on campus a couple times this year to see them play, as I was all the schools. There's not much more to say than that. I'm a big fan of the program, as I am all of our schools. They play a big part in our future, and we're excited that they're here today.

Q. To follow up on Barry's question, where do you sort of see the Big 12 and its place in the 12-team playoff moving forward and kind of where the conference fits in compared to the other Power conferences?

BRETT YORMARK: I'm very bullish on where we're going.

This is a conference of great parity, and I think we even get stronger next year with the four corners coming in. We'll be well represented in the playoffs. I'm excited to see it unfold next year.

Q. I was curious where you stand on the 12-team format, if you would prefer a 5-7 format with the dissolution of the Pac-12, or would you rather have 12 at-large teams?

BRETT YORMARK: We sent that to the CFP board, as I'm sure you're aware of, 5-7, and I was strongly in favor of that format for all the right reasons.

Q. What is your message to Texas and Oklahoma as this is the last time either team is going to play in the Big 12?

BRETT YORMARK: We thank them for getting us to where we are today, for being pillars in this conference, and for creating a great history and legacy, and we wish them well.

When I took this job in July of '22 and I was asked a bit of a similar question, I had no emotion about it. Things happen in life. They made a decision it was time to have another chapter in their journey, if you will.

As I've often said, there's no better time than now to be part of this conference, and I firmly believe that. We wish them well, and I'll be rooting them on in the SEC.

Q. Scheduling question actually, two of them. When do you anticipate the Big 12 might release the conference schedule for next year? Then I know with the new world and the 12-team playoff, I'm just curious what's sort of been the talk or the messaging to schools about the nonconference games? I know a lot of them are scheduled out far. What's sort of your talk to the teams about what the conference would like to see in nonconference scheduling?

BRETT YORMARK: I defer to my subject matter experts on when the schedule is coming out. What do you think, buddy? What's your thoughts there? That's why I brought him today. You can speak right to him.

SCOTT DRAPER: Target around the first of the year, but we'll take however long we need to get it right.

BRETT YORMARK: And your thoughts on the nonconference? It's not going to change much, but I'll defer to you.

SCOTT DRAPER: As you mentioned, our teams are

scheduled out the next few years. We work with our teams to make sure they can play the right opponents in the right cadence. We want them to do what's best for them. Whatever they do, we'll support.

Q. Maybe this is a question for Scott too. We'll see.

BRETT YORMARK: I bring everyone with me. No fighting over authorship here.

Q. We didn't end up with a chaotic outcome with the tiebreaker situation, but I'm curious as you worked through the past few weeks -- and obviously the Power Five leagues are growing. They're going to be dealing with this next year. Is there any thought about would divisions ultimately be beneficial to solve some of that in the future, or do you like sticking with the plan of no division?

BRETT YORMARK: I don't think that would help moving forward. I think what you see today in this conference is what you'll see moving forward.

Again, there was no confusion on our part. It was just reinforcing what that tiebreaker outcome would look like. As I said earlier, it was head to head and common opponents, but if Scott wants to add to it, please feel free.

SCOTT DRAPER: Nothing to add.

Q. What have you encountered about the job that has surprised you to this point?

BRETT YORMARK: I get asked that question a lot, and I've got to tell you, I love this job. It's the best job I've ever had in my career, and I've been in some pretty good places. I love the passion that the fans bring. I love the diversification of it. We have 25 sports in our conference, 15 of which are women's sports, and 25 is based on the two that we're going to bring in next year.

Love the people. No surprises really. I kind of -- you know, when I signed up for it, obviously there was a lot of things I wasn't aware of, but I think my skill set has transitioned really well. I work with a great group of ADs, a great board. They're giving me a lot of flexibility and leeway to transform this conference and take it to new places, which I think we've all seen over the last 15 months, but it's been fantastic, and I love it.

I often describe our conference as a bit of a mature startup, only 27 years in the making, and we're just getting started. I'm going to end again by there's never been a better time to be involved in this conference than right now, and it's only going to get better.

I thank all of you for what you do, for how you cover this conference. I want to wish you a wonderful day today. Most importantly, a great holiday with your families.

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