

# Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: Arizona State vs. Iowa State

Saturday, December 7, 2024

Arlington, Texas, USA

AT&T Stadium

## Brett Yormark

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to another Dr. Pepper Big 12 Championship. Thank you all for being here. Just like the last couple years, we'll start with opening remarks for Commissioner Yormark and kick it off for Q&A.

BRETT YORMARK: Nice to see everyone today. First of all, thanks for being here, thanks for your great coverage throughout the season. I've said it before, proud of the teams that are here today, mostly how things played out this year. I said it in July that we'd be the deepest conference in America, we'd have incredible parity, and I think it's played out that way.

If you think about coming into the last week of the season, nine schools in contention and then ending up with a four-team tiebreaker, I think that's about balance and parity.

Excited about what we're building here obviously. Excited about Iowa State and ASU today. You look at ASU, they were picked 16th before -- well, preseason polls, and now they're in the conference championship.

Spent some time with Coach Dillingham this morning. He's a real passion guy, and I told him never lose that. I'm a passion person, as all of you know, so we have a lot in common when it comes to that.

Spoke to Coach Campbell this morning as well. That's a gritty team over there. They got off to a great start, had a couple of weeks where they were facing some injuries and things didn't go their way, but ultimately very resilient, and they find themselves here too.

Two ranked teams, I'm really proud about that. I don't want to get into too much about how we're positioned versus other conferences. I did a lot of that on Wednesday. But I will say where I sit there should be no comparison between us and any G5 conference champion.



Strength of schedule matters. We play nine conference games. We mandate a tenth. You know the data points. I don't want to get into too much of that today, but I'll double down on that for sure.

Hopefully the Selection Committee will do what they need to do. I have a lot of trust and faith in them. They've heard my point of view. It's been pretty public. They have to go to work, figure it out, and we'll see where we land.

I feel good about where we are and feel good about being in the CFP. Hopefully we'll end up in the right spot, get that bye, and then go from there.

**Q. You have called this a tentpole event. I know this is the first year with the 12-team playoff and all of that, but we've seen what's happened with some of these games. SMU, there was talk maybe they shouldn't even play the game because of data points. I know they didn't say that, but there's hints of that. What do you this does for the future of conference championship games, or do you still feel the way you did about this game last year?**

BRETT YORMARK: Yes, I do. It's a tentpole event. For this game specifically today, it's win and you're in. So it's a very meaningful game. It's going to be a very dramatic game.

We love being here at AT&T Stadium. I should have started off by thanking the Dallas Cowboys and the Jones family for being such great hosts.

No, this is an important part of who we are, our brand, and we're going to continue to have championship games here at AT&T.

I will tell you, though, for the fans there's an unintended consequence when you think about the 12-team format. Fans now have to decide what games they want to go to. There was a little media mention about that this week. If you host that first round game, you're going to four games to get to the finals and to win the championship. That's something that's new. Plus the conference championship.

On the fans I think it's kind of challenging right now, but from a conference perspective, this is an important moment for us, gives us a chance to amplify who we are. We're live on ABC, big audience, big platform, important for our student-athletes. So we'll continue to be here.

**Q. I'm wondering is the Big 12 at all interested in clarifying its tiebreaker rules to one perhaps a little bit more clear to fans and some of the people watching?**

BRETT YORMARK: Well, I think our tiebreaker rules were very clear. In fact, we had a championship portal on our website. We over communicated. I thought it was very fluid. I'll defer to Scott Draper, who's here, but I think when you look at us versus the other conferences, we over communicate to the fans. We're on social media.

Starting last Friday we had a tracker every game updating our fans on where we were updating our fans on the tiebreaker and how it would play out. So I'm thrilled with the work my team did.

**Q. You mentioned Kenny's passion and you being a passionate guy yourself. Was there a moment this season that you saw from him or heard about it, like, okay, I can relate to this guy. I can see the passion in him.**

BRETT YORMARK: Kenny and I have a little history. I got to know Kenny last year, even before they officially -- ASU became part of the conference. One of my dearest friends George Pyne, his son played for Coach, so I got to know him through that dynamic.

Again, young guy, really all about passion and energy, galvanizes his team. He's given that team a bit of an identity. It's very relatable for me. I told him this morning we're cut from the same cloth.

Glad he's in our conference, and I think he's going to do really well here.

**Q. Forgive me if you addressed this Wednesday and didn't want to go back to it today, but I get to thinking about the schedules. You guys play an extra game as compared to a lot of the other conferences. Is there room to change that? If there's no reward for the extra game, why keep doing it? Has those conversations come your way?**

BRETT YORMARK: We play nine conference games, as you know, but we also mandate a tenth against a P4 opponent. That's why I constantly speak to strength of schedule.

As it relates to nine conference games or eight, we'll have that conversation with our ADs next week, but I will tell you there's a lot that goes into that, and there's a lot of parties that are involved and how that will play out.

We like the nine game conference schedule, but we'll discuss it, and rightfully so. I think after every season we get together with the ADs, we do an after action review, what worked, what didn't, how we can get better, and we'll do that and go through that exercise next week when we're in Vegas together.

**Q. It almost feels like -- you talked about the parity and the balance. It almost feels like they're penalizing you for that. Just curious going forward, how has the Big 12 changed that narrative? It feels like this league will always have that balance.**

BRETT YORMARK: I hope not. We're building something pretty special here, and it starts with parity and balance. Over time certain schools will ascend to the top, and I've said that publicly before. I think that's going to happen here.

We're 16 strong. Obviously we've integrated a lot of new schools -- eight, in fact -- over the last two years. I think within time you'll find that certain schools will distance themselves from one another, and I think that's the evolution we're going to go through.

So parity and depth right now is what I'm selling candidly, but moving forward, I think it might be a little different.

**Q. Travis Hunter is not here, but he is a finalist for the Heisman Trophy. The Big 12 tweeted some highlights of him last night. Do you feel he should win the Heisman?**

BRETT YORMARK: Not even a question, and I'll be there in New York next Saturday. Travis is a generational player. I mean, we've all seen what he's done playing on both sides of the ball this year. I've seen him play quite a bit over the last year. I just don't think there's even any competition for the Heisman.

I look forward to seeing him next week and shaking his hand and giving him a hug when he gets it.

**Q. We're going to be down beating over our head with the whole SEC, Big Ten. How does any league not named the SEC or Big Ten beat that rap? This idea that any school not affiliated with those conferences is somehow substandard.**

BRETT YORMARK: First of all -- I should have trademarked it, I've said it so many times -- don't look at logos, look at resumes, and I firmly believe that. Again, I have a lot of trust in the Selection Committee, but I'm not about facial recognition. That shouldn't play a role in any decision-making.

We're going to have to discuss that amongst the management committee at the end of the season. I think we will not just discuss format, we will discuss the Selection Committee, how they base their opinions and their rankings, what data is being used, what are the core metrics? I've said that before. And if I have to lead that conversation, I will.

All I want to sign up for here is fairness, and I've said that also publicly. So I look forward to having really thoughtful conversations with my commissioner colleagues on what the CFP looks like moving forward.

I will speak to the format for a moment. I was a big fan of the 12-team format. They started that discussion when I arrived here as the commissioner. I think it's unfolded in every way we had hoped. Ratings are up, fan engagement is up, and the month of November has been pretty magical when you think about all the possibilities and scenarios.

So we'll see what we do there, but I do think we need to have a really thoughtful conversation on the Selection Committee and how the ranking is being done. Again, look at resumes, look at the data. The data doesn't lie. So we'll see where that goes.

**Q. There's been obviously various groups or committees that have tried to meet with the four or five major power conferences to do different things to bring the sport maybe back to its previous setup. I know you and the ACC have met with those groups, but the Big Ten and SEC don't seem to have as much interest. How do you get those conference to maybe listen to those approaches?**

BRETT YORMARK: Are you talking about the super league concept?

**Q. Where the four conferences would come together with the College Sports Tomorrow approach.**

BRETT YORMARK: I'm going to say on the record what I've said before. College football is very healthy right now. I mean, Saturdays are almost bigger than Sundays.

Look at the media attention that's out there. It's a big business, and it's very visible, and it's only getting bigger.

I'm not a firm believer in third party intervention. I think, when and if the model has to change, we as an industry, led by the Power Four commissioners, and our media partners need to come together and figure out what does that next model look like?

There was a meeting this week obviously. I advocate for my board to listen and learn, but where I sit today, I'm not supportive of third party intervention. I'm just not. I haven't seen anything that they've come up with that we can't do ourselves.

Appreciate the interest in what we're doing because there's a lot of it, but I think we can take care of it ourselves.

**Q. You look at the two teams that are in this game, obviously a team that was picked last place in the conference, a team that hasn't won a conference championship since 1912, when you look at the teams and the competitiveness and specifically who was competing in this league, how do you think it helps the league or changes the league long term that you have teams that are able to really from top to bottom kind of jump up?**

BRETT YORMARK: I think it played out exactly the way we had hoped. Again, I said early on that parity and balance would be how we define this conference this year. But that's not always going to be the case, and I do expect that over time certain schools will ascend to the top, but I think it starts with parity and balance.

I love the fact that top to bottom every weekend, the unexpected can happen, and that's what played out this year. So I'm thrilled with the season, but think again over time that dynamic should change and will change.

**Q. I'm curious -- love that quote, right? Resumes over logos.**

BRETT YORMARK: I was thinking about bringing a T-shirt in today or a hat. But my wife said to me, no, we can't do that.

**Q. I'm curious about how the conference will help universities expand their brands. So what can the conference do to make the logo matter differently to the casual fan?**

BRETT YORMARK: That is a great question. I had a board call yesterday, and we spoke about that because brands matter. In fact, brands matter more than ever before, and I'm a brand guy. If you look at the conference and how we've reimagined and transformed our brand, we're working very diligently with our schools to do the

same.

When I took this job, I realized that amongst the conference we had a lot of emerging brands -- not household brands, emerging brands. One of the reasons I went early with ESPN and Fox was I felt it was important for us to be on the biggest platforms possible to reach the biggest audience in order to elevate and amplify our school brands, and we'll continue to do that.

If you've seen some of the things we've done from a business perspective this year, we created new partnership, we tuned in radio with Big 12 radio, national radio platform to enhance our narrative. We have our first ever FAST channel, which is critically important as we control our narrative and expose our brands to households across the country. We have a CMO, first time in 27 years we had a CMO here to think about brand, not just at the conference level, but at the school level. So we're very brand conscious, and we're going to double down on that effort.

But that's a great question, very timely.

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