

# Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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## Greg Sankey

### Commissioner Press Conference



GREG SANKEY: Good morning. I'm going to go off script, which will make my staff nervous. Three points of recognition this morning. I've often thought we should have a media hustle award, but I'm not really confident in what behavior that may encourage.

So I want to give my first shout-out to George Somerville, who I was interacting with on Twitter, College Football Chaps podcast, getting here from London. Second is a guy named Ben Burnell, who captured me for the first interview of SEC Football Media Days yesterday in Utica, New York, right at the finish line of a 15K, which is a new level of hustle being tracked with your race results.

And the third would go to Nick Saban, who apparently was denied access because he didn't have his credential this morning and had to go back to his room. So we teach those lessons quickly.

It's great for us to be here in Dallas, Texas, for the SEC's 2024 version of Football Media Days. We're thrilled to be in a city where Dak is the quarterback, where the Dallas Mavericks made a run to the NBA Finals with a number of players from the SEC including Kentucky's PJ Washington, Arkansas's Daniel Gafford and South Carolina's A.J. Lawson, where our 2019 Women's Basketball Player of the Year and Mississippi State alum Teaira McCowan is part of the Dallas Wings, where over in Arlington, Florida's Wyatt Langford is having an impact in his rookie season for the Texas Rangers, and tomorrow night in Globe Life Field Paul Skenes from LSU, now a Pittsburgh Pirate, will take the mound as the starting pitcher for the National League in the All-Star Game.

To build my local credibility, back in 1991 I was here in Dallas for a set of meetings. I was with Bobby Williams, who's now the athletics director at Sam Houston State University, and we said, hey, do you want to go out to Arlington Stadium? Those of you who are locals will remember Arlington Stadium, before the ballpark and before Globe Life Field.

Nolan Ryan was pitching that night against the Toronto

Blue Jays, and I brought, just to prove my credibility, the ticket from his seventh no-hitter that I attended while I lived here in Dallas because I spent 11 great years of my career here. Our two daughters were born just north in McKinney, Texas. I occupied offices along north Central Expressway when I worked for the Southland Conference, and it's great to be back here in Texas, representing the 16 universities of the Southeastern Conference.

Following a video that began with words like Billy Cannon running, Manning rolling, Manning looking. It was Archie Manning back in 1969 in Legion Field at a game, the first televised Saturday night game we had on ABC. It's Larry Munson yelling for Lindsay Scott.

It's a statement that here history runs deep, and then you saw Pat, as in Pat Summitt, and Perry as in Perry Wallace, and Goose Givens shooting over Duke in the 1978 Final Four, and you heard three words: passion, rivalry, family.

You saw confettis, you saw trophies, you saw champions, you saw celebrations. You saw a quarterback leading the marching band, and you saw Olympic Medalist after Olympic Medalist. That's the imagery to which we're accustomed in the SEC.

Then you saw something new. You saw Bevo, and you saw the Sooner Schooner, and you heard from 14 deep to 16 strong. 16 is our today, and 16 is our tomorrow.

Those 16 universities represent the currently enrolled student body of right at a half million, a global network of 5 million living alums and former students, direct local economic and state impact exceeding \$100 billion annually, a number that will continue to grow.

And the innovative nature of these universities has caused us in the Southeastern Conference through the collective campus work to be the first collegiate athletic conference to convene an artificial intelligence consortium that's already creating research and collaboration and programming partnerships, including a faculty education program about how you manage artificial intelligence in the university learning environment. We've already engaged over a



thousand of our faculty in education around that important topic, a new topic, an emerging topic in which we intend to lead as campuses.

We also gather Thursday here at Football Media Days to hear from a panel labeled Artificial Intelligence in Sports panel, that takes place, and I encourage you to join in that opportunity.

And staying in the technology sector with the changes taking place in college football, I am pleased to acknowledge that as we explore new ways to use technology in our competitive experiences and to advance the sport of football, we're proud to work with Apple to introduce iPads for sideline use during the upcoming football season to elevate the performance of our student-athletes.

You know the college football rule change that's gone into effect this fall permits teams to use this video resource and the large multitouch display of an iPad, combined with its amazing performance and incredible portability, I know has benefitted me on a daily basis, and it makes it the ideal solution for our coaches and student-athletes to use in-game video efficiently.

The now 16 athletic programs in the SEC last year earned 11 total National Championships. The SEC is the only conference to participate in every one of the 14 College Football Playoffs. For the 18th consecutive year, we led all leagues with the most NFL players drafted at 59.

We're excited about this year's College Football Hall of Fame inductees that include Kentucky's Tim Couch, Arkansas's Dan Hampton, Alabama's Antonio Langham and Texas A&M's Kevin Smith, and we're pleased to celebrate with new member, University of Oklahoma, the induction of Dewey Selmon, who's both an Oklahoma legend and the father of Mississippi State University Athletic Director Zac Selmon.

In the NBA Playoffs that I mentioned a moment ago, players who had played on SEC teams were represented in a greater number than any other conference with 49. One third of this year's WNBA All-Star roster are from the SEC. For the 2024 Major League Baseball season, we had 88 players on opening day rosters, and yesterday saw 20 players taken in this year's Major League Baseball draft. You're probably tired of hearing me say it, but those numbers are the most of any conference.

For the 25th straight year, we led the nation in football attendance. For the 28th consecutive year, we led the nation in college baseball attendance, having 8 of the top 10 attendance leaders in 2024.

Our softball already led the nation in attendance, nearly doubling the next closest conference. The same is true in women's gymnastics, and one of the growth sports for us, women's soccer, led in both average and total attendance during the 2023 season across the country.

We're also proud to have finished yet again with another SEC versus SEC College World Series Championship final this year. It was Tennessee and Texas A&M, the sixth overall SEC versus SEC baseball final, the third in the past four years, but if you adjust our membership, and remember it was Oklahoma and Ole Miss a few years ago, SEC teams have been consistently filling the National Championship series.

There's a total of 21 times across all sports where a National Championship, like women's tennis this year between Georgia and Texas A&M, involved two SEC teams.

When we look ahead to the Paris Olympic Games, there are a total of 270 Olympians with SEC ties. 85 will populate the Team USA roster, 42 of those U.S. Olympians are returning Olympic competitors, and 43 will be first-time Olympians.

We will have every one of our 16 universities represented on the U.S. Olympic roster, and that roster in U.S. track and field includes 35 percent of that roster being comprised of representatives from SEC universities. In swimming and diving it's 37 percent of that roster. We will have representatives on all four of the U.S. Olympic basketball teams, the men's basketball five-on-five team, the women's basketball five-on-five team, and the same in both the men's and women's three-on-three teams.

Let's go back for a moment to our opening video, and while I'd rather talk about All-Stars and Champions and Olympians, I want to focus on some words you probably missed. We said in that video that was used to celebrate the additions of Oklahoma and Texas as new members just a few weeks ago that it's time to update. It's time to update your expectations for what college athletics can be.

Many of you have written or opined about this being a unique time for college athletics, time for movement, obviously, and a time of change. We as leaders are responsible for navigating what really are for us in college sports uncharted waters of change.

We're doing so at a time when the pressures to recruit, to win, to draw people in are just as high as they've ever been, but we've added a set of external factors, the litigation that presses in, state-level legislation,



conversations with Congress, and the emergence of the next great idea that is sold or pitched as something that will quickly and fully resolve the issues currently faced in college sports.

But the reality is there is no easy button we can just go push to resolve the issues we face. There's no magic pill. Anytime you go through a reset, it is difficult.

This past Saturday evening, we were reminded of the stress and divisiveness that's present in our nation, well beyond any playing field. We know that elections are fundamental in these United States of America, and none of us are expected to all agree on how votes should be cast.

In fact, probably most of us try to avoid those conversations at family gatherings. We'd rather talk about the weather, talk about how the kids or grandkids are doing in school, where somebody is going on vacation, or maybe who's going to win the game on the upcoming Saturday.

When you attend one of those games on Saturday and you look around, you see democrats and you see republicans. You see liberals and conservatives. You see those who work in a white collar setting and those who work in a blue collar setting. You see young and old, families and individuals, people from every religious background, every demographic range in this nation.

This sidebar is not about politics. It's actually about what we do on Saturday, that comfortable point of conversation at those family gatherings. These remarks are about the ability of people to come together even when there are differences.

On Saturdays in this country, for decade after decade, people come together.

We actually need more of what we do in college sports. In college sports, and in college football in particular, we know there's an opponent on the field and spread across a stadium there's apparel from the opposing teams, one dominant, one in the minority, but in those stadiums, I've stood with sometimes 100,000 or more to sing the National Anthem, sometimes thinking that the entire stadium is actually participating.

I've joined in those stadiums as you watch maybe a Chinook helicopter fly over or a B-2 bomber or an F-22, just amazed. Then celebrated a little bit later in the game when during the break we stop and we bring the flight crew onto the field and celebrate them for their service.

I've heard the absolute silence in a crowd of thousands and

thousands of people revved up and ready to go who stand for a moment to honor someone we've lost.

We actually need more of those unifying moments in this country, and that's why I say, again, we need more of what college football does in this nation, not less. We need more of what college sports does because that unity I talked about and those variances that exist within a crowd aren't just in a football stadium. You see them at baseball games and basketball games and along all of those sports that I cited just a moment ago.

In fact, if you drove in on a morning to Hoover, Alabama, to our baseball tournament, you would see tents pitched with university logos and colors of a particular fan base, and it's not long before somebody else starts to trickle in, and I can recall this year seeing a South Carolina tent pitched right as I drove in, and underneath were Vanderbilt fans and Tennessee fans, gathered having a conversation. They're actually smiling despite being dressed differently.

Under an Auburn tent, Florida fans and Georgia fans gather for those same conversations. That's the reality that we need and the lessons that we can learn through college sports. We need more of those unifying moments, and again I'll say it, we need more of what college football and college sports does and can do because we're at a time filled with uncertainty, and that exists in our culture in a big picture, and it exists in college sports.

On May 23rd the plaintiffs settled lawsuits, along with the NCAA, the ACC, the Big Ten, Big 12, SEC, and Pac-12 announced agreement on terms of a settlement related to a set of lawsuits, and while that agreement does not resolve every issue and it is not a finish line, it does provide us an opportunity to move forward in modernizing important elements of college sports.

There's a lot of work still to be done. There's work to finalize the full terms of the settlement agreement. Beyond just terms is the hard work of implementing the outcome of that agreement. We are literally working to make what would normally be a decade's worth of change in a matter of months. We're not in a world either where we're allowed to focus on just one issue or even one small set of issues at any particular time.

As you know, there are other lawsuits. We have state attorneys general that have engaged in lawsuits against the NCAA. We have state legislatures continuing to enact or change laws that govern how we conduct college athletics. There are outside ideas that come from those apparently associated with private equity firms, professional leagues, search firms, former executives from leading media companies who want to insert their thinking.

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We have new wave entrepreneurs who want to be in on the so-called front end of a new paradigm for college athletics.

But it's our leadership responsibility to figure this out. In a moment I'm going to repeat some things I've repeated in past years, and you could potentially say, well, there he goes again, but you know what, change doesn't happen in an instant. We are dealing with an incredibly complex set of issues that when I sit down with some of those leaders in the areas that I've mentioned and I describe the various challenges we face, it is universal, whether it's a professional league commissioner or a member of Congress, a high level attorney, at some point they'll look at me and say, that's the most complicated situation I've ever heard. That's why there's no easy button.

But we have the responsibility on our university campuses to constantly be evaluating and exploring the best partnerships and innovations that protect the collective interests of our universities while also tackling new legal and political realities.

But we also have to do that in a way that continues to engage with our fans, that continues to honor the traditions that are important to our campuses and our communities, and yes, we're going to seek to capitalize on new revenue opportunities that support our athletics programs and our student-athlete participants.

We've been incredibly successful, and I understand why so many outside of the campus and conference realm are interested in coming in and being a part of it, but that responsibility lies with us to bring people into the solution, not to cede authority to external actors.

We know who we are, and the Southeastern Conference, we're the one conference at this level where the name still means something, the southeastern part of the United States, where when we expanded, we actually restored historic rivalries while adding only 100 miles to the longest campus-to-campus trip our student-athletes will experience

We're a conference where in survey after survey we have the most avid fans by comparison, not just the most draft picks, not just the most teams in a championship, but the people around our programs who want us to lead, again, not give authority away.

They're passionate about their team and the competition among their team and their rivals in the Southeastern Conference. We have dates that have meaning, that we understand in this culture. They're passionate about those long-time rivalries, passionate about the opportunity to spend a Saturday in their favorite football stadium, maybe

visit a new place, or maybe from time to time tour all the stadiums in the SEC.

In the SEC we know the importance of education, what it can mean in the life of a young person. You know what, there's more money involved. We also know there's more graduation success involved and there's more opportunities to bring people back who may have left after their playing experience was complete without finishing their degree. Nobody needs to tell us to ride that opportunity; that's who we are.

The number of former competitors I encounter, whether they're Olympians now or professional athletes who had an SEC playing experience, maybe they're on the sideline to be presented an award or just to be honored for what they contributed to that campus, frequently I'll ask, why did you decide to come back, and with the same level of frequency, those young people tell me, this became home.

That doesn't happen with some set of abstract ideas. It happens because there was something very different about college athletics and college athletics in the Southeastern Conference than there is at the professional level

We know we have a responsibility to deal with our shortcomings. We know we have to act to solve our own problems, and we're doing that just now.

But we want the College Football Playoff. America wants the Final Four. We desire a College World Series or a College Cup, and to do so, we need national standards.

Here's where I restate some things I've said before. I'm actually the voice of our student-athletes because they have said over and over, we deserve better as student-athletes than to have a patchwork of state laws that tell us how to manage our name, image and likeness. We deserve better than a race to the bottom for competitive purposes on a state-by-state basis, and we as student-athletes want to know when we line up for a kickoff, tip off in a basketball game, first pitch in a softball or baseball game, that the people occupying the other uniforms are governed by the same set of standards governing us.

We've also experienced changes in sports gambling, and we've seen some really difficult stories play out at the professional level where people have lost their careers. Last year I spoke about a head coach who had lost an opportunity in our own league.

I'll say again, it's not good enough for states just to allow legalized sports gambling. They owe protection to the participants, and the online and direct pressures that come

from those who aren't successful in their gambling decisions affect our participants in every state. Legalized sports gambling needs to put in place clearly stated laws that protect participants from hostile behavior.

We're going to continue our dialogue with Congress. Again, we're going to have to make decisions on our own. We have to do those with the right legal counsel. But Congress is a place that can help set national standards and address the issues our student-athletes have raised.

We're not waiting for change to land in our laps. We have a responsibility to engage with our Congressional leaders. Our leaders are elected to lead, and I appreciate those conversations.

But on behalf of the now over 8,000 student-athletes in the Southeastern Conference, the future doctors and lawyers and engineers and teachers and nurses and real estate agents, the leaders of tomorrow, my ask again is that Congress continue not only to engage in conversation but help with us resolve some of these outstanding issues and restore clear national standards for college athletics.

I told you earlier it's good to be in Dallas. I hope you have four great days. I'm going to shift from the heavy to just acknowledge a few things.

First, thanks to our SEC staff. You have no idea -- you don't just show up and make this work. They're a great group of volunteers that want to make sure you have a successful and productive four days, so please ask if we can be of help.

When you move these events around, it's not done often, we were the first, we've done it the most. We appreciate some of our local hosts here, the Goodyear Cotton Bowl, Rick Baker's leadership and friendship, Michael Konradi, Marty MacInnis and others on this staff.

Since we're in Dallas and I referenced my Southland Conference days, I began a long time ago flying Southwest Airlines, and Southwest is housed here, and we announced that they are the official airline of the Southeastern Conference last week, recognize and thank them.

We appreciate the Dallas Sports Commission and the leadership of Monica Paul, their help to get us here, but also how we light up the skyline with the SEC theme throughout the week.

The Omni Dallas in Guadalupe Rueda, Courtney Roy and the entire team here, also Anthony Travel and John Anthony for actually securing us a location.

I'm also going to announce a little bit of news. It's a little bit of news. We've moved around from Birmingham to Atlanta to Nashville and now Dallas, and in 2025 we're going to return to Atlanta and the College Football Hall of Fame with our Football Media Days. I also want to say thank you to Regions Bank, who is a year long sponsor, but the sponsor of our Media Days.

They also played a key role in something called SEC Startup. I promise you, I'm almost at the end, so I'll catch you on this one. This is a competitive business pitch competition among our student-athletes, who are the future entrepreneurs. They make a presentation in a pitch competition with their business concepts presented and reviewed by a panel of judges. It will be shown on a program tonight on the SEC Network at 7:00 eastern. SEC Startup's debut includes student-athlete entrepreneurs from Auburn, Florida, Missouri and Oklahoma, 7:00 p.m. eastern time on the SEC Network.

I'm about to jump into questions. I'm going to go back and say there's a lot that's happening. There's a lot that could cause us to say, wow, where's the hope in this? Where is the finish line?

I also sometimes think finish lines are too much of a focus because we have to look to the future. And as much as there may be that's viewed as problematic, those successes I mentioned just scratch the surface. We haven't told a lot of individual stories, but they're there.

I'm optimistic about our future because I get to spend time with the leaders in the Southeastern Conference, the leaders today and the young people who will be leaders tomorrow, which is why through all of this change I'm convinced our best days are still ahead.

Thank you for being here. If you're in Dallas and Kevin Trainor is here, you know it's a big event. Kevin is going to help guide us through our question-and-answer period.

**Q. Can you expand on why we're in Dallas today, and what makes the communities along the I-35 corridor from Austin to Norman a cultural fit for the SEC?**

GREG SANKEY: A few things. One, we actually made an effort to move here in 2018 with Media Days, thought that Dallas might be the right first place. We have an incredible alumni population in the Metroplex, and we did some research on that back to 2018. I didn't have to go back and conduct that research.

Again, it's one of the most accessible cities in the country, the variety of ways you can travel here, allows you to run a



15K in Utica, New York, and be here for dinner at the end of a Sunday, like I did yesterday.

Our move in 2018 was a recognition that we had moved west with Missouri and Texas A&M, with the border states, and Arkansas and Louisiana with LSU, made sense not just to be -- if we are going to be at more than one location, how do you touch the perimeters? We had a basketball tournament in St. Louis, Missouri, back in 2018 if I have my dates right. So we are used to that movement.

We've had three years to prepare for expansion, which is, I think, a record long time, and as we went through the expansion, that made western events more and more important for us, and we pretty quickly decided to move Media Days. We looked at Houston, looked at Dallas were the two that were our biggest focus.

Here the transition from Norman to Columbia, Missouri; Fayetteville, Arkansas; College Station, Texas, that movement is really easy. We are a big part of Texas. Texas is a big part of us now. I've always seen coaches traveling here during my own travel. We've had a bowl game affiliation here for a long, long time, and all of those relationships combined to make it the right move for us, and I encourage you to have fun fitting that into a small sound byte.

**Q. I know there's been probably a lot more important things with college athletics, but I was curious if there was a plan for an SEC tiebreaker system now that there's no divisions to be able to settle an SEC Championship.**

GREG SANKEY: Yes. In fact, we had our athletics directors on a videoconference Thursday where we provided an update. It is a lengthy plan consolidated around, I think, eight principles. We go back to our athletics directors at their next videoconference that's about two weeks away. We can finalize that any time between now and the start of the season.

We have an annual in-person meeting where any of the little pieces that have been identified for review can be refined and finalized. So absolutely.

**Q. Certainly the house settlement as proposed for the next 10 years limits some legal liability, but USA Today recently reported that in the last 10 years the NCAA has incurred \$433 million in legal expenses alone. Anybody can sue anybody for anything, but how do you lower the temperature on that?**

GREG SANKEY: Part of the current settlement effort is to resolve, to the extent we can resolve as much as possible,

to do just that. We're not alone in college athletics at being pursued from a litigation front. You saw what happened in the NFL Sunday Ticket decision. You look at Major League Soccer, just doing research on Law 360, you can see the existing open lawsuits there.

We clearly have had to think differently, and you can see that happening as decisions are made on policy. An element of the question is how much authority can be managed at the national level through the NCAA? That's clearly what's under full scrutiny, what can be managed at the conference level. If it's less nationally, how you actually have Final Fours and College Football Playoffs if everybody is to have a different set of rules.

I also would observe that when you look at litigation that exists at the professional level, it's not an indication that that model solves all litigation threats. The simple observation is we live in a litigious society and we have to continue to make wise decisions informed by legal counsel and be prepared to defend those decisions that are made.

Lastly, we're dealing with historic change, and again, people have written over time they should have changed sooner. The reality is whether you take that opinion or not, the change is happening now.

**Q. How closely are you following Florida State and Clemson's challenge to the ACC, and if they succeed, what sort of ramifications do you see for the entire college sports landscape?**

GREG SANKEY: How closely do I monitor what's happening in the ACC, and what are the implications?

I pay attention. As I said, we're focused on our 16. I've said before at Media Days, I'm not a recruiter. My job is to make sure we meet the standard of excellence that we have for ourselves on a daily basis. That attracts interest. It's done that with the two universities that we have added this year. They're not the only phone calls I've ever had, but I'm not involved in recruitment.

Our presidents have been clear that I am not going to entangle us in litigation around expansion. So I pay attention, but I'm not engaged in those conversations.

In fact, as I understand, the issue is agreements have been signed, the decisions have been made among a conference, and the question is are those going to be honored as they were established? And apparently that's for a court to decide now.

The broader implications, obviously if things change, then there's a new level of uncertainty. It already creates

speculation that I think is counterproductive, but I don't spend an enormous amount of my time thinking about it. I certainly don't spend any time engaged in that recruiting activity because we're focused on our 16, and I want to be respectful of the difficulty that's currently faced with that issue -- that set of issues within the ACC and my colleague Jim Phillips.

**Q. You mentioned the regionality of the SEC and the name still meaning something to this conference. Can you ever see a college sports landscape in which you would feel like branching out of the southeastern part of the United States with your conference membership would be beneficial?**

GREG SANKEY: We're focused on our 16, period. You've seen how we've made decisions over the last decade plus for contiguous states to join. I think that's incredibly wise and provides remarkable strength.

I'm not going to guess about what happens next.

**Q. As a follow-up to that, I think you said 16 is our today and 16 is our tomorrow in your opening remarks. I just wanted to clarify. Tomorrow, does that simply just mean tomorrow, or is that a long-term future tomorrow?**

GREG SANKEY: So the last three questions are a part of the reality, which is I've responded now three times where our focus lies. Our focus is on our 16 members. I have a responsibility to pay attention, and I'm certainly not going to fuel speculation on what happens next.

We can certainly remain at 16 for a long, long time and be incredibly successful.

**Q. You worked with him throughout your entire career as commissioner on the other side of the headset with Coach Nick Saban, but what can he do to help our league continue to grow and navigate the ever-changing world of NIL and the transfer portal now as a member of the media and a voice of college football?**

GREG SANKEY: What can Nick do? Well, help us avoid rat poison would be the first on the list. He and I spoke -- it was a couple days after the announcement of his retirement, and I think one of Nick's observations, I think it's fine to share, is the ability to be influential in a different role outside of coaching. He and I probably dealt with, well, you're doing this because Nick thinks it's competitively favorable.

One of the things I've found over time is Nick in many ways

uniquely thought ahead on issues, provided really deep and clear insight, and he and I have had any number of conversations over -- this is my tenth year as commissioner, but I've been in the SEC for 23 years, and but for the two years he was with the Dolphins, were in conversation throughout those couple of decades.

So I think he can bring that clarity. I think he can bring an understanding that even I don't have dealing with these issues on the front lines as a head football coach, and I know he brings love of the game overall to an analysis.

I have seen him engage in conversations already in a big picture problem solving way, and I hope that will continue, and he can evaluate my performance, since he's sitting in the room listening, my performance in answering that question.

**Q. Greg, you clearly knew a lot about Oklahoma and Texas three years ago when they agreed to come into the league, learned a lot about them since then. What did you learn about them with your two visits to Norman and Austin in the last couple weeks?**

GREG SANKEY: So the Austin visit was June 30th. The first on my priority list is don't be the last speaker between a crowd of thousands and Pitbull's performance. So that was a non-advantageous position, and we won't let that happen again.

In both places you saw the passion for their programs play out, and then in individual interactions while I walked around campus, even running on Sunday morning in Austin or Monday morning in Norman with a logo on and people doing a double take.

It was fun to see in those communities displays of the SEC logo, at a leadership level to have deep conversation about what the decision means for each campus and me talking about what it means for the conference.

I learned more about drone shows than I thought I would know, given the performances at both places, and I learned that both clearly meet what one of our athletics directors called the "it just means more" test.

So that avid fan base that I spoke of earlier that is in backward looking surveys, both Oklahoma and Texas bring that same type of avid fan base to a set of peer universities and peer athletic programs.

I also learned it's hot in a tuxedo in Norman, Oklahoma, on a football field late at night in July.

**Q. Texas liked to think it ran things in the Big 12. I**

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**was curious what you would state as far as your expectation of Texas's influence and impact on the playing fields and in the boardroom?**

GREG SANKEY: I actually think I just answered that, that both are now part of a conference with peer athletic programs and peer universities, so they'll fit, and we'll fit together, the 16.

**Q. I heard you and Dustin mention that there's no better time to be a college athlete than right now, but I do wonder from talking to college athletes, what are their biggest concerns or issues that you hear from the players themselves?**

GREG SANKEY: What are the biggest issues? I'll walk through some of them. One, that they dislike this notion of every state having a different set of rules around how name, image and likeness is conducted. They dislike lining up in contests and not having an understanding that those on the other side are held to the same standards.

Whether you want to believe it or not, they're not looking to be employees, and we've had pretty free-flowing conversations with them about what that may mean on what's perceived as a positive side and maybe the more problematic side.

One of my really great conversations, Henry Coleman III who plays basketball at Texas A&M, right after we announced expansion, Henry was on our men's basketball leadership council call and asked, when are they going to join? I said, is that because you don't want to play your in-state rival or you do? He said, I want to play them as soon as I can.

Our student-athletes want great competition. They want the excitement of our stadiums and our arenas. They want to be against the highest level of competition.

My reference to baseball is not accidental. I think the improvement of our baseball is in part about how our programs have positioned themselves, invested in facilities to attract coaching talent, and that attracts talented players who want to line up and compete against each other. Those are quick elements.

They want to know that they're going to be supported. If they're injured, they want to be cared for. They want to know that they have mental wellness care and support available. They tell us that that mental wellness area, they want us to eliminate any barriers or perceived road blocks, them accessing that, that might be viewed as problematic, so maybe some distance from their coaching staff just so they can have a safe space when it's needed. And they

want to play for a championship in a meaningful way.

**Q. You talked repeatedly this morning about being focused on your 16. Can you talk about the impact that Texas and Oklahoma are going to have on league revenues and what your outlook is for the current TV contracts and what they can expect as far as bringing in more money?**

GREG SANKEY: Well, we don't parse out our money because we just add to. Our revenue is generated by 16, and clearly the revenue happens in a couple different ways. One is at a national level, so competitively there are opportunities, whether it's the College Football Playoff, NCAA Tournament revenues that are available. With more, you have more mouths to feed but more opportunities to access those types of postseason revenues. Same with bowl games.

You have conference revenues, so we have media contracts that can be adjusted. We have a network that draws eyeballs in on a national basis. All 16 of our schools combine to create that interest.

Then at the local level, their positioning of their programs, whether it's football, basketball, gymnastics, baseball, soccer, how do they draw people in, how do they monetize that interest? All of those are, if you will, seamless across all 16 of our universities.

Certainly when you add the history of both of those football programs, it creates interest. There's one place on the globe this fall where there will be an F1 race and a college football game at the highest level, and that's in Austin, Texas. That's going to be an incredibly high demand ticket. You think about Texas playing at Texas A&M, the interest in that game.

But I shared when Kentucky first visited College Station for football, they brought 10 to 12,000 fans in because that's what we do together. That's why I don't break things out into just two. It's about 16 working together really well.

**Q. You talked a lot about college sports and needing to take control of its future and not necessarily allow others to dictate, but there's also been so much talk about how you need help from Congress to get this under control. How do you balance those two things? We can't do this alone, but we also have to do it alone. We also have to be the masters of our future.**

GREG SANKEY: Well, I don't think it's just do it alone. Let's just take a step back.

The first hurdle that you look back that has to be

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



overcome, and this goes back 30, 40 years, is the system was perceived as working very well. Young people came in, they had opportunities. There were certainly problems, things changed, the money changed, societal expectations changed, and adaptation was slow. Part of adaptation was slow is higher education can be slow to adapt, so that's not unique on our campuses. It may be different in society.

Again, it was also, whether you look back and Monday morning quarterback, right or wrong, the system worked pretty well, provided those Olympians those opportunities, for people who wanted to go pro in sports and those who didn't want to go pro in sports to learn and gain an education. A lot of first-generation points of entry, so those were all seen as valuable.

When we've walked through conversations, so back to the fall of 2015 with our presidents and chancellors, I probably didn't recognize that there are five fields of play the way I do now, and this is the illustration that I don't think we can do this alone.

The five fields of play are the sports. We have to be there because of litigation.

The second is Congress. We're active in that conversation because you talk about national standards.

The third is at the state level. So even in our footprint, could you normalize or standardize state legislation, among our 12 states now, to support that equitable competition our student-athletes are asking to be a part of.

The fourth is at the college and campus level, how do we make decisions, and then the fifth is the NCAA.

Now, if you can create the right kind of linkages between all five, there's a perfect outcome. I can't ignore any of those five. I can't work on four. That doesn't mean all five have to work together to provide a path forward.

We may have to do elements of that at conference levels, given the scrutiny we're under. But it would certainly be a much more healthy conversation if that could happen consistently at a national level.

I hope that's responsive, and it illustrates both the why did it take so long. That's a little bit of our history in higher education. It was perceived as working well. Plenty of criticism that it didn't.

We've clearly adapted. You just think about the changes in the last 10 years, forgetting the outcome of the current settlement. There's a lot of things different around college sports, and that informs why I take the position there's no

better time, yet we still have work to do.

Thank you, again, for being here. Look forward, I think, to most of our conversations through the rest of the week. If our staff can be of help or if I can be of help, to the extent my time permits, I look forward to engaging in conversation, and I look forward to being back shortly to introduce our first head football coach of the day.

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