

# College Football Playoff Media Conference

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Grapevine, Texas, USA

## Gary Barta

### CFP Weekly Ranking

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to the second College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference for the 2020 season.

Joining us tonight are Bill Hancock, Executive Director of the College Football Playoff, and Gary Barta, the College Football Playoff Selection Committee Chair.

At this time I'd like to turn it over to Gary Barta for some opening comments.

GARY BARTA: Good evening, everybody. We have concluded our second week, the Selection Committee. By now you know has ranked Alabama first, Notre Dame second, Clemson third, and Ohio State fourth.

Just a few pieces of information on why Alabama just continues to impress. They're powerful on both sides of the ball. They took on their in-state rival in the Iron Bowl. Always a tough game, but Alabama beat Auburn convincingly. Of course, they've already beaten two other top-10 ranked teams.

Notre Dame is a very good football team. They're 9-0, including two wins against ranked teams. A good showing against No. 17 North Carolina last week.

Clemson, another powerful team, 8-1. Their only loss coming to Notre Dame in a game in which they were without their quarterback, the much anticipated Trevor Lawrence return. Came back, and with his leadership, the team continued to impress.

Ohio State remained No. 4. They didn't play this week. The last time we had a chance to watch them was against No. 12 Indiana. But they just continue to lead an explosive offense under the direction of Justin Fields, averaging 45 points a game.

As we do every week, we spend a lot of time not only on the top four teams but all 25 rankings. This year it's fair to say there's additional challenges, there is a discrepancy sometimes between a team that plays eight or nine games,



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a team that's played three or four games. Frankly, it's a problem. It's a problem that is nobody's fault. It was created by the pandemic.

But the bottom line is the greater body of work that a team brings to the committee, the more the committee has to evaluate. That's why we spend so much time evaluating every team 1 through 25.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank everybody on the committee. I know firsthand they are people who care about the game of football. I know they take it seriously. Like I do, they're grateful for the opportunity.

With that, I'd be happy to turn it over and take some questions.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

**Q. Gary, you moved Iowa State up four spots this week. What did you like about the Cyclones? You got three Big 12 teams in the top 15 right now. How did you see the Big 12, which has been on the fringes this season in terms of contention?**

GARY BARTA: Well, we don't look at conferences as a grouping. Certainly there are a lot of great teams that are in our top 25 from the Big 12.

Iowa State specifically, the game against Texas on the road was a heck of a football game. So that win combined with their previous win against No. 11 Oklahoma, they're in first place in the Big 12. Brock Purdy is just a winner. They've got one of the better runningbacks I think in the country in Breece Hall.

When it was all said and done, that's how they got to No. 9.

**Q. Oklahoma at 11, Oklahoma State at 15, how you sort of saw that?**

GARY BARTA: Oklahoma didn't play this last week, so we didn't have another game to evaluate. They won five in a row. They beat Oklahoma State. They beat Texas. Spencer Rattler, he was obviously highly touted, especially with the way he came in, maybe started the expectations

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high. He's playing really good football. That put them at No. 11.

Oklahoma State, they beat Texas Tech last week. When you combine that over the wins over Iowa State and No. 4 Tulsa, you combine that with the teams that were around them. Seven of the teams that were above them either didn't play or lost. The combination of their body of work, most importantly, and then combining that with the people around them, really pushed them up to get into that 15 spot.

**Q. Gary, I'm going to ask one of those questions I suspect you might end up having to talk around, but... You talked about the discrepancy of games. Is there any thought to when there are not enough games, where that has to be held against a team? It certainly looks like the possibility that could be. A couple of contenders could be way short.**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, that's a fair question. We spent time this summer talking about the possibility. Then we spent time last week talking about it specifically as we were evaluating the games.

This week, because we're another week in, there are teams that have added to their résumé, but some teams that didn't add, we talked even more about it.

We don't have a set number. It is a challenge and a problem to evaluate a team that's played three games and try to evaluate them side-by-side with a team that's played nine games. We're doing it, it is doable. But it clearly becomes one of the pieces of the puzzle, one of the evaluation criteria as we looked at it so far, I'm sure as we go forward.

**Q. Gary, specifically in the case of the Florida-Texas A&M question, you guys have your own proprietary metrics and things you look at. There are some metrics out there that says Florida has had the better performance overall, but the head-to-head went to Texas. How much in this case does a head-to-head victory matter?**

GARY BARTA: Well, it matters. It definitely is one of the criteria that we use to evaluate.

Both teams, they're both with one loss. Texas A&M's only loss is to Alabama. They beat Florida, as you mentioned. Most recently last week, you watched the Kentucky game that Florida played, and that was a first half that really Kentucky was playing well in. Florida eventually ended up pulling away. Texas A&M, again, continued to play great defense.

When you go through all those criteria, at the end of the day I would say there was a lot of back and forth. Kyle Pitts is back for Florida. He had three touchdowns. He's a difference maker.

At the end of the day, Texas A&M, with all those other criteria, Texas A&M did beat Florida. That ends up tipping it over to Texas A&M's side.

**Q. Gary, on the ESPN show, you mentioned the debate between Ohio State and Texas A&M. My question is, how close was that call for the committee? What does the committee specifically see when it evaluates Texas A&M?**

GARY BARTA: We don't ever go through and take an official vote. What I can tell you is there was discussion in the room about putting both Ohio State and Texas A&M in that fourth slot.

As I mentioned on the show earlier, the firepower and the explosiveness of Justin Fields and Master Teague and Garrett Wilson, all those offensive weapons, the fact that they did beat the No. 12 team the last time they played. It was discussed that they played four and Texas A&M has played seven. That certainly was discussed.

When it comes to Texas A&M, defense is what the committee sees and is most impressed with when it watches Texas A&M. They have a heck of a defense. They beat No. 6 Florida. They only lost to Alabama.

The committee does continue to keep an eye on Texas A&M's offense. That game against LSU, 20-7. When those two teams are put side-by-side this morning and last night, there just wasn't enough there to put Texas A&M ahead of Ohio State.

Great discussion, but Ohio State came in at No. 4 and Texas A&M at No. 5.

**Q. Gary, before the first rankings came out, the Playoff put out a release that there is no minimum game requirement to get selected anywhere in the rankings. Given the fact there are still unbalanced schedules, how do you weigh the fact there's no minimum requirement, yet you do have to at some point take into account how many games these teams are playing?**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, the release that there's no minimum requirement is the Management Committee. Then as we got together as a Selection Committee, did not want to put a box around a specific number.

That being said, it is absolutely something we talk about and have to consider as one piece of the evaluation because the more games we're able to watch, the more we're able to evaluate a team.

While there's not a set number, there's not a minimum requirement, it is one of the factors that's talked about when we're talking about comparing different teams.

I hope that makes sense and answers your question.

**Q. Could you just give any more specifics about what the committee is talking about and what you're looking at when you have two teams on the screen, one which has played four games, like Ohio State, and one that's played eight or nine, whatever it might be? How are you doing it? Does it just come down to, We think they're a better team?**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, it's unusual. I was on the committee last year. We didn't have to experience something this challenging. As I said, when you're evaluating teams that have three or four games played versus teams that have seven, eight or nine games played, it can create challenges.

That said, you still have wins and losses. You still have teams against who they compete. You can look at the strength of the teams they play against. The final piece of that puzzle, you alluded to it, is you watch every one of those games and you just determine who has the better team to the best of your ability.

The good news is, it's not one person's eyes, it's 13 sets of eyes. People have varying degrees of football expertise. You've probably been through the mock process at some point, some of you on the call have, where it's a process you go through.

It's not just one person's opinion. It's 13 opinions of people who know a lot and have spent a lot of time around the game of football. We get feedback from everybody. It's pretty comprehensive.

I'm not afraid to tell you that the differential in numbers of games played is a variable that I hope this is the only year ever has to be considered.

**Q. I know you don't like to look ahead, so I'm asking this question with that in mind. There's a possibility that a team could play, like Ohio State, outside of the Big Ten championship game, play potentially a higher-ranked team. What is the value of the conference champion versus that potential extra game**

**against a higher-ranked team, how you view those without looking too far ahead?**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, I'm not going to speculate on Ohio State. I'll just kind of in general.

If you play a highly ranked team at any time in the season, obviously we pay a lot of attention to that. If you have two highly ranked teams playing each other, that's a variable, a measurement, a game that makes for good evaluation.

The other thing that you know, I think, is that one of our criteria, one of our tiebreakers, is conference championships. Those are two separate variables, both of which are really important.

You're right, I'm not going to go down a speculative path of thinking what could happen in any particular case related to Ohio State or anybody else.

**Q. Gary, you touched on this a little bit last week. Marshall, who has been inactive for a couple weeks, how important is it for the committee to not necessarily hold that COVID-related inactivity against the team? I guess that can apply for the whole top 25 as a whole.**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, I don't know if it was you last week I spoke to, but Marshall has a heck of a football team. They're top 20 in several defensive and offensive categories. They're very well-balanced. They're holding their opponents to fewer points.

At the end of the day, they're 7-0 right now. We put them at the 21 spot. They didn't move this week. They were idle. They didn't play. But just evaluating them any more is going to be dependent on if we have any more games to evaluate.

**Q. In regards to a conference championship game, a team like Ohio State could potentially be left out of the Big Ten championship game just because it doesn't play enough games. How would the committee look at that in terms of the team potentially not making the conference championship game just through no fault of its own?**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, I said a little bit earlier when somebody asked about the evaluation, is there a set number, then the evaluation of a team that's played fewer games, a team that's played more games. In our evaluation, there's head-to-head, there's common opponents, there's strength of schedule. One of the criteria we use is conference championship.

If a team does or doesn't play in a conference championship, that certainly is one less criteria we can evaluate. It's not the only one, but one less we have available to us.

I guess that's the best way I can answer that. It's one less piece of information. It's an important piece, but one less we have to evaluate.

**Q. Gary, obviously Alabama, Notre Dame sit atop at 1, 2. Clemson, who lost a close one to Notre Dame, is 3. When did the committee start having some heavier discussions about maybe possibly 3, 4, 5? Is there a true gap between 1 and 2? Where was the heavy discussion this week?**

GARY BARTA: Well, some people might think that because of Alabama's 8-0 record, wins over two top-10 teams, scoring 50 points a game. All those are accurate. Alabama is a heck of a football team. But we still talk about it, we still break it down. We talk about what did we see in the Auburn game, what were their strengths and weaknesses. Then we did move to Notre Dame.

It's not like it was a foregone conclusion that 1, 2, 3 were going to stay where they were a week ago. We start with a clean slate every week. We went to No. 1, placed Alabama. Went to No. 2, placed Notre Dame. So on.

We still spent a lot of time there even though people might assume we just kind of move on.

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to thank everyone for joining us tonight. We will speak with you next week.

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