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Gary Barta

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL
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BRETT DANIELS: Welcome, everyone, to the second College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference for the 2021 season. Joining us again tonight is Bill Hancock, the executive director of the College Football Playoff, along with Gary Barta, our College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair. At this time I'd like to turn it over to Gary for opening comments.

GARY BARTA: Thanks, Brett. Good evening, everybody. Well, we've concluded our second week of work as a Selection Committee, and by now you know we ranked Georgia No. 1, Alabama 2, Oregon 3 and Ohio State 4.

Georgia just continues to dominate in all areas, both sides of the ball, so the committee has them at No. 1.

With Alabama, despite their close loss to LSU, the committee still views them as a strong, well-balanced team. Their offense and defenses statistically are still in the Top 5 in several categories, and they have five wins against teams with better than a .500 record.

Oregon coming off of the win at Washington, some nasty weather, they're ranked third. They have a win against a top-10 team, as well, and then Michigan State's loss allowed Oregon to move up one slot.

Ohio State had its win on the road against Nebraska. They're ranked No. 4. The committee has them -- continues to be impressed with them, particularly offensively. It's worth noting that teams ranked 2 through 6 all won, but the committee just didn't see a separation, anybody rise to -- the logjam that I referred to last week is still in place.

Also of note, in the top 25, eight of the teams that we had ranked in the top 25 lost this past weekend, so there was -- because of that, there was a lot of up-and-down movement throughout the rankings. As I've mentioned before, in other words, it's November and it's college football, so a lot of great conference match-ups happening every week, including the week ahead.

I just again want to thank all of our committee for all their hard work. It requires a lot of time. They're watching a lot of games throughout the week, so just grateful to that group.

A note that Rod West was not able to participate, one of the committee members, this week. He will be back and rejoining the group next week. With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Q. Could you kind of talk a little bit more in detail about the decision from 2 to 7, I guess? Obviously none of those teams won impressively last week. As you said, is that why nobody really made that jump?

GARY BARTA: Yeah, I called it a logjam. When you look at 2 through 7, really 2 through 6, the committee goes through each team and talks about if anything changed from last week, their strengths, their weaknesses. As you mentioned, they all won, but nobody separated themselves in that group. Nobody reached out and tried to push themselves ahead.

That's how it ended up 2 through 6, and then I think your question has to do with Michigan State. Were you asking how they ended up at 7, or was that --

Q. Well, I am curious in terms of the head-to-head thing. I know obviously nothing happens in a vacuum, but Oregon beat Ohio State; they're ahead of Ohio State. Michigan State beat Michigan but they're behind Michigan. Can you explain that?

GARY BARTA: Well, the explanation that I'll give in general is, first, head-to-head it certainly one of the criteria we look at. We look at wins, losses, we look at strength of schedule. We look at common opponents, et cetera.

I think you know there's several criteria, and then there's 13 members who are watching every game and evaluating.

The Michigan-Michigan State discussion really started last week, and I would just kind of summarize that the committee went back and forth, and really consensus was that Michigan probably is a more complete team.

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Statistically offensively, defensively, they're ranked higher than Michigan State in just about every category.

That being said, the committee gave great credence to the Michigan State win head-to-head against Michigan.

That discussion went back and forth last week. This week the same discussion goes on. What's changed? Michigan won and Michigan State lost. So for this week, we slotted Michigan State at 7.

As we come back next week, each of those discussions will happen again and we'll have another data point to look at.

Q. Oklahoma is lower than the typical unbeaten team this late in the season, and the reasons are apparent, but I was curious whether it's just the lack of strength of schedule, the repeated close games, or the solitary game against Kansas when they were clearly just -- something was up; which of those three do you think is the most detrimental to Oklahoma's cause at this point?

GARY BARTA: I don't know that I'd pick one. To point out one thing you said, it wasn't just the game against KU. If you look at it, they are 9-0 and that's why they're ranked eighth in the country and not somewhere else. But they don't have any signature wins. Their best wins are against Kansas and Texas Tech.

I mentioned last week, the committee noted as probably anybody who's been watching Oklahoma that the quarterback change to Caleb Williams has changed that team, and so they were off this past week, but just looking to see if that continues, because I do think that made a difference. The committee thinks that made a difference.

But there just hasn't been a signature win yet. If you compare them to Michigan State, for example, Michigan State beat Michigan. If you look at Notre Dame, they've beaten Wisconsin, they've beaten Purdue, so they're sandwiched in between there. But there's a lot of football to be played. Oklahoma is 9-0, and we'll see starting this weekend.

Q. Earlier with regards to the Michigan and Michigan State discussion, you said the committee felt that Michigan was probably the more complete team. I was wondering how the game between those two schools went into that decision, the game a couple weeks ago between the two.

GARY BARTA: Well, in the end, while there was a lot of discussion about looking at watching the teams play,

looking at the statistics, looking at the way that Michigan is ranked statistically in offense and defense, all of that was part of the discussion. But at the end of the day, last week Michigan State beat Michigan, and the committee felt that that meant they should be ranked ahead of Michigan.

This past week, the same discussions occurred, and it went back to the feeling or the sense of the group in watching the games, watching the teams play that Michigan just looks to have a more complete team on both sides of the ball, still giving credit for Michigan State for winning head-to-head, but Michigan won this past week, Michigan State lost, and so for this week, the committee put Michigan at 6, Michigan State at 7, and I'm guessing that debate will continue depending on how both those teams do going forward.

Q. Kind of following up on this discussion about the performances overcoming head-to-head results, can you provide some transparency to the performance metrics or better play on both sides of the ball that have Oregon still ahead of Ohio State at this point of the season?

GARY BARTA: Well, the back-and-forth, looking at the win that Oregon has, the Ohio State win, they also beat Fresno, they won at UCLA, the play of their quarterback, they won at Washington in a really bad weather situation. You look at Ohio State, they have nice wins at Minnesota and Penn State, beat Maryland. They're playing really well offensively. Nebraska is a tough place to win at.

But as the committee stopped and had that conversation back and forth, both teams won this weekend, and neither team separated themselves. Last week the difference maker for the committee was the Oregon win at Ohio State, and I would just suggest that since nothing really changed in the committee's eyes since last week, both teams won, both teams were on the road, Oregon maybe shined a little bit more, but at the end of the day Oregon ahead of Ohio State this week.

That doesn't mean that that criteria would be the same the rest of the year. It depends on next week. We'll do it all over again.

Q. My question has to do with Notre Dame. Obviously Oklahoma is between Notre Dame and the Michigan schools; how close is Notre Dame to the Michigan schools, and maybe if they showed improvement as an overall team to their statistical profile, will that help them down the stretch, even with a less-than-challenging schedule?

GARY BARTA: Well, the starting point is when we've had

these conversations, I mentioned having the conversation between Michigan and Michigan State. What generally happens, we don't have that just between those two. I know we had conversations that grouped everything from Michigan down to Oklahoma State, and we talked about, we compared all of those teams against each other with all the statistics we look at and we break it down.

The long answer to your question, and then I'll try to shorten it up, is Notre Dame is right there with those groups. They're 8-1, they had nice wins at Wisconsin and Purdue.

To your last point, keep winning, obviously, for any of these teams, and maybe the strength of schedule provides some more opportunities moving forward for some of those other schools, but like anything else, if Notre Dame just keeps winning, we'll have to see what happens with Oklahoma, Michigan State, Michigan that are above them.

Q. You referenced the discussion that took place last week between Michigan and Michigan State; was there some discussion in the room last week or people in the room who thought that Michigan should be ranked ahead of Michigan State last week immediately after Michigan State beat Michigan on the field?

GARY BARTA: I'm not willing to go there. What I was saying is there was and continues to be discussion that Michigan in the opinion of the committee is a more complete team. That's the dialogue that we had last week, and it continued this week. But I don't remember every part of the discussion last week other than to say that Michigan State got the respect and the nod for the win head-to-head over Michigan.

Q. Wondering if you could give me the committee's just general assessment of Oklahoma State to this point, please.

GARY BARTA: Very impressive. I think like most people across the country have watched Oklahoma State over the years, the fact that their defense is so dominating this year is noted. I know just this past week, I think they had seven sacks, and they really dominated that game at West Virginia, which is a tough place to play. They've beaten Baylor. The only loss is at Iowa State, which is a tough place to play.

The committee thinks very highly of Oklahoma State. They're 10th, and I haven't looked ahead to see who they play next week, but we'll continue to watch them, and very impressed with them.

Q. I was just wondering how much over the past two

weeks you guys have talked about Penn State if at all because they have some wins over some of your top 25 teams but they haven't been ranked. I guess why, is my question.

GARY BARTA: Yeah, I'd say this week we talked about them more than a week ago, and we talked about them a week ago. They're in the conversation. The committee sees them as a very good team, a tough team to play. When we talk about somebody beating Penn State, it's seen as a good win.

Like most of the times when we have these conversations, when you compare them -- I'll look at No. 25 this week who's Arkansas. They have a win over Texas A&M and they beat Mississippi State. So are they in the discussion? Yes. They haven't made it to the top 25, but very good football team.

Q. I was just curious if head-to-head should be applied consistently if you're comparing multiple sets of team A versus team B and C versus D in the same set of rankings. Does the committee believe that it should be viewed the same when you're comparing different teams?

GARY BARTA: Well, what the committee does is we take every piece of information we have available, and so we look at the record. I know I'm being a little redundant. We look at common opponents, we look at head-to-head, we look at strength of defense versus offense. 13 people watch the games. We're watching the games all week long, and so that's the subjectivity part of it, but by design there's subjectivity by people who are watching all the games.

It's considered in every case. That doesn't mean in every case head-to-head is going to put one team over another. This is my third year on the committee, and I can tell you that I know numerous examples where head-to-head is overcome by other things, and in this ranking alone this week, it's no different. There are some head-to-heads where one team is (inaudible), there's some where they're not, and that could still change as the year goes on.

Q. Just to balance that, so the committee head-to-head deciding factor for two teams but not the others in the same rankings?

GARY BARTA: I don't know if -- I'm sorry if I don't quite understand your question.

Q. I'm just saying, the committee is fine with head-to-head as a determining factor for a couple of teams in their ranking but is decided not to be the



deciding factor or the separator for other teams in the same set of rankings?

GARY BARTA: It's considered in all ranking discussions. It's not the sole data point that we use.

For example, if someone has one loss, we don't automatically say that the undefeated team is ahead of the one loss. Same thing with head-to-head. It's considered. It's looked at, but it isn't the only piece of information that we make the final decision upon.

BRETT DANIELS: Thank you, Gary, and thanks, everyone, for joining us tonight. This concludes this week's Selection Committee call.

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