

College Football Playoff Media Conference

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USA

CFP Selection Committee

Chair Gary Barta

CFP Executive Director Bill Hancock

CFP Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joining us tonight is Bill Hancock along with Gary Barta.

GARY BARTA: As you know, this is our next to final rankings. You've seen the outcome -- Georgia, No. 1; Michigan, 2; Alabama, 3; and Cincinnati is at 4. A reminder, this coming weekend the committee will have another piece of information to add to our process. Obviously referring to the conference championship winners.

Winning a conference championship is an additional part of our protocol that the committee follows when we put together our rankings. It's a reminder -- it's not the only factor we consider but it is an important piece of information. And obviously we'll be able to review that for the first time once the champ games are all done.

I do want to thank you. Many of you have been showing up every week and reporting on the outcome of the rankings. And the committee appreciates the fact that we're able to share our thoughts and you're able to get information to fans. Appreciate everybody's attendance tonight and throughout the year.

Q. Wanted to talk about the coaching changes and availability. In the instance of a team that has a coach or a player injury, but doesn't play in the championship game, is there a way you can kind of weigh that? Or is it kind of a situation where if they don't play, so you can't really evaluate a difference without a coach?

GARY BARTA: You broke up a little bit but I think you got the gist of your question. I'll try to give it an answer. For everybody on the call just a reminder, during the regular season, we don't look forward at all. So if we know



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someone is going to have a game coming up, we don't evaluate that. We only evaluate games that have occurred. And if a coach or a player wasn't available for that, during the game that we're evaluating, then we bring that into the discussion.

For championship, after the championships are all played and for our final ranking, referring to the committee does have in our protocol the ability to consider any players that won't be available or any coaches that won't be available and then factor that in along with our other protocol, our other criteria.

So, again, I didn't hear all of your question, but yes, if we get done, when the championships are done and if anybody is in our conversations that has a player that won't be available, and the committee deems that it's likely it will affect the outcome, but that's the words in the protocol, then that can be discussed and can be considered. And each of the 13 members can weigh that the way they want to weigh it, compared to head-to-head competition and common opponents and all the other things we evaluate.

Q. Saturday night Oklahoma State and Oklahoma played the last game, I think the last meaningful game of the night. I assume every committee member got to sit and watch it. What did you learn and what did maybe some of your committee members from what you ascertained learn sort of watching OSU in that game going into this final week?

GARY BARTA: One of the things we learned is this was a playoff game, for all intents and purposes. The winner goes on to the Big 12 Championship. So one of the things you learn is how a team or how teams can handle that kind of pressure. And I think both teams handled that well.

Obviously Oklahoma State came out on top, which means in that pressure situation, whether it's the offense under Spencer Sanders or the defense that's been playing so well all year, they found a way to win in a really -- it was also a rivalry game.

So the committee took that all into account in watching the game. We just learned that two really good football teams but Oklahoma State came out on top. They were able to

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score some points. The defense continues to play well. I don't know if we learned anything specifically about offense or defense, but certainly learned a lot about the character of the team under pressure.

Q. Gary, following up on the Notre Dame question, I know that, as you said, the committee does not try to project when looking at the regular season. But I guess a two-part thing here: One, I guess it's difficult to ignore the reality of the situation that you guys are sitting there talking last night or even this morning that the news is breaking that Brian Kelly is leaving Notre Dame. But also isn't Notre Dame in a much different situation than these other teams considering that they do not have a conference championship to be looking forward to and for you to judge, and that now that their regular season is over? So in a way that if you were to discuss it this past week, you would not be discussing or trying to project what's going to happen in the conference championship; you actually are projecting how it will affect it in the postseason. And that's what's actually in the principles and protocols.

GARY BARTA: There was a lot in there. Here's the way the committee talked about it and views it. Champ games are going to occur, and some of the top 10 or go down to top 15, wherever you want to stop, will have an opportunity to play in a Big 10 champ game, in the case of Michigan, or Big 12, in the case of Oklahoma State and Baylor, et cetera, et cetera.

But there's also going to be a team that's going to lose each of those games. And there's going to be teams that don't play. There's going to be winners and losers in the champ games and those that don't play.

I can't project how that's going to impact a particular team like Notre Dame or Ohio State or Mississippi because they don't play. But when all the champ games are done, that's when we'll do our homework. That's when, if there is a team that's going into a game, where we can project whether or not a player or a coach not available is going to make a difference.

Q. I guess, following up on that, like I said, Notre Dame doesn't have a conference championship, so you are projecting already for them this past week, you're projecting what they would look like in the playoffs. So what's the difference between doing that, say, today and doing it a week from now, now that the regular season is already over?

GARY BARTA: What I'm sharing with you is when we were doing rankings we were not projecting. We were evaluating. Just look at the teams right around them --

Oklahoma State compared to Notre Dame compared to Ohio State, based on what happened through this past weekend. That's all we were evaluating. So the ranking that you see -- 5, 6, 7 -- is based on that.

Q. I wanted to get the committee's opinion on BYU. There seems out of a slot in the New Year's Six game. What is the committee thinking about them at 12?

GARY BARTA: Well, they're a really good football team. They have the win over Utah. And I know it isn't -- Arizona State is not in the Top 25 but Arizona [lost audio] has been playing better football. They have a rusher who has rushed for over 14, 1500 yards and a whole bunch of touchdowns.

They're at 12. When you compare them to the team that ended right above them, Michigan State, Michigan State has the win against Michigan. So the committee certainly took that into account. Michigan State also has a great rusher in Kenneth Walker. The strength of schedule that Michigan State has is a little bit more difficult than BYU.

And then when you look at this past week, the committee looked at the win that Michigan State had over Penn State and compared that favorably. BYU did beat USC but the committee -- when all those factors were taken into account, Michigan State went ahead of BYU. But to your bigger question, the committee thinks very highly of BYU's team.

Q. Considering the teams that are in the top five, all are involved in championship games. What will the committee be looking at in the various championship games? Are we talking about just the control of the game? Are we talking about clean play? Is it an overall eye test? What are they applying to the winners as they view them in the championship game?

GARY BARTA: First of all, it's just exciting to get to this point of the season and have the opportunity to watch all these champ games. It seems like football season just started. But here we are, we're going to sit and watch, Friday and Saturday, we're going to watch all these great champ games.

You know, I would say we already have formed -- the committee has already formed opinions. And you said one through five. So we've already formed a lot of, using the whole season, we formed a lot of thoughts about all of them. And so we'll use that information. We'll still use that information when we come back on late Saturday night into Sunday morning.

But then we'll have an additional piece of information. And

we're not looking for any one thing in those champ games. We're looking to see what that adds to what we already believe about those teams. I mentioned earlier Oklahoma State showed the committee that in a playoff-like environment against Oklahoma in a rivalry game, they really found a way to win. We'll see how that game goes against Baylor. We'll see how Baylor does against Oklahoma State. They have [lost audio] beat Oklahoma earlier.

So there's not one thing that the committee is going to look at. But we all watched the games together. So we'll have a chance while we're watching -- I'm going to be sitting in between an NFL Hall of Famer and a long-time, couple long-time collegiate coaches and other ADs, and you have an opportunity to talk while you're watching, which is really invaluable.

Q. Question about that protocol. I just looked it up on the website. It does say player or coach moving forward if it would affect the team's performance. I know it hasn't come up in major ways over the years, but does the committee think that they're similar? Would a missing coach be a different level of impact than a missing starter?

GARY BARTA: The great thing about the way that the management group has set this up is [lost audio] dealt with protocol and principles. And then they don't give specific direction to the committee on how we use it. So what I mean by that is there might be one committee who thinks, hey, this team might be more motivated with their new coach. Or I've seen games where a quarterback who starts or running back that starts, they put in the next person and the team actually plays better.

So it's a piece of information that the management group has said the committee is able to use but all 13 members may end up using it slightly differently when they place their vote. That's the beauty of the way the committee works. We all have this criteria that we need to use, we're responsible for using. How each committee member uses that in their vote might be a little different for all 13.

Q. We are going to set a record tonight for questions about the No. 6 team in your ranking. Regarding Kyle Hamilton, Notre Dame's All-American safety, who, the timeline for his injury was supposed to -- full recovery was supposed to have happened this coming weekend. Now, if Notre Dame doesn't voluntarily mention what his status is and whether he's going to play in the game and whether that timeline is true, will you go to seek that? Will you try to find out from Notre Dame what it is? The second part of the question is a little bit more splitting hairs on the coaching thing. I

mean, if it's a staff where a bunch of assistants also leave between now and Saturday, if that also, if the committee has the latitude, I guess, to factor that in?

GARY BARTA: So, I'm going to do the best I can to answer your question. The committee wants and the CFP wants every bit of information it can get. Obviously if, for some reason, Notre Dame would choose not to share that, there's nothing we could do about that. We do have another round of calls this week where we'll be talking to the conferences and the representatives. So there will be an opportunity for the information to be shared.

We can't control if they choose not to. So that's sort of part one.

Part two, we'll just have to wait and see what the situation looks like before we try to see how it's going to fit into our valuation.

The way it's written is if the committee believes that there would be a likely effect on the outcome of the game based on who is coaching or who is playing, it can be considered.

So I know that's loose, but I'm not even going to -- I'm going to wait until Saturday night when everything's happened, we'll take all the information that's been given to us and we'll try to factor it in.

Q. You've been very consistent discussing Michigan these last few weeks and the [lost audio] team. I was wondering your impressions, the committee's impression of the performance against Ohio State?

GARY BARTA: The committee has been calling, referring to Michigan as a complete team now for about three or four weeks as we were watching the team. And I just think about what the defense was able to do. Hutchinson, but not just him, but he had an incredible performance; they were able to put pressure on Ohio State's offense and really contain an incredibly explosive offense, both passing and running.

Then on the flipside of that, for Haskins to do what he did and they were able to run the ball in kind of difficult conditions, I would just tell you the committee was not surprised at the way Michigan played -- maybe, like everybody, a little surprised at the way the score ended up. But just a complete team.

And that's how the committee's felt about Michigan now for quite a while. And they showed it in a championship environment.

I talked about with Oklahoma, Oklahoma State. That was

a playoff game. This was certainly a playoff game. And under that kind of environment, Michigan showed that they were able to find a way to win and win convincingly against a really, really good, a great Ohio State team.

Q. I would like for you to talk about Cincinnati. Do you think there's a way that they could possibly be left out of the top four even if they get a convincing win on Saturday against Houston? Do you think that's possible? Hopefully that's not -- do you think it's possible?

GARY BARTA: I'm consistent in telling you that we as a committee don't project. So they're going to play a champ game against Houston. Georgia and Alabama are going to play. Michigan and Iowa are going to play. Oklahoma State and Baylor. We're going to watch all those games. And then until that occurs, until the last game is played, we won't be having any conversations about who is going to be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, et cetera, and that's the way we go about it.

So until those games are played, there's really no way to predict who is going to go into those spots.

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