

# College Football Playoff Media Conference

Sunday, December 5, 2021  
Grapevine, Texas, USA

## Gary Barta

CFP Media Conference

BRETT DANIELS: Thank you for joining us today. We'll kick things off in just a moment.

Thank you, and welcome to the final College Football Playoff Selection Committee media call for the 2021 season. Joining us here today is Gary Barta, College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair. At this time I'd like to turn it over to Gary for some opening comments.

GARY BARTA: Thanks, Brett. Good afternoon, everybody. Well, it's been an exciting weekend. We started Friday night watching games and meeting, and then all day yesterday, and then when the games concluded last night, we went late into the night and went through our ranking process, got up this morning and continued through that, and when it was all said and done, you saw how it came out.

Alabama No. 1, Michigan No. 2, Georgia at No. 3 and Cincinnati at No. 4.

Here's some indication or some explanation of why we ranked the teams the way we did. Alabama at 12-1, Michigan at 12-1, Cincinnati at 13-0, all three of those are conference champions, and we took that into account certainly. Alabama had beaten the previously ranked all year long Georgia Bulldogs at No. 1, and Michigan had beaten the previously ranked No. 13 team in Iowa, and then Cincinnati remains undefeated, the only undefeated team left in the country, and they had beaten the previously ranked Houston Cougars at 21. In each one of those games those winners were in a dominant fashion.

Georgia had its one loss, and that loss of course being to Alabama, No. 3 coming in, and really had been the dominant No. 1 all year long.

Notre Dame came in at No. 5. I know that the Committee has talked about that one of the protocols that's available during championship weekend is to discuss whether or not the coaching change at Notre Dame was going to come into effect and impact our rankings. The Committee talked



COLLEGE FOOTBALL  
**PLAYOFF**

about it but, in fact, did not see that as a factor in our evaluation.

As for the New Year's Six bowls, you saw that the Rose Bowl chose No. 6 Ohio State to play the Pac-10 champion in Utah, and the Sugar Bowl chose No. 8 Mississippi to play the Big 12 champion, No. 8 Baylor. Then the Committee matched up No. 5 Notre Dame against No. 9 Oklahoma State in the Fiesta Bowl, and then finally the Committee also paired No. 10 Michigan State against ACC champion No. 12 Pittsburgh in the Peach Bowl.

If you would just allow me one moment of just sharing with you, this is my third year on the Committee, and I was just honored to be on the Committee, and certainly now to serve as chair the last two years, I knew that it would be a lot of work, but I welcomed it. It's been a blast.

Really what it's been about, I love college football. I love the people with whom I was able to serve and the staff, so just grateful for the opportunity.

All 13 members of the Committee certainly stand out, but we had graduation day. We had seniors today serving in their final meetings. Charlie Cobb, Paola Boivin and Tyrone Willingham as well as myself all in our last year, and I want to thank all of them, and wish the Committee going forward, those returning and the new members, great success in the years ahead.

Again, to all the journalists, thanks for covering the great sport of college football. With that, I'd be happy to open it to questions.

**Q. My question is I understand you ranked the teams as you see them, the Committee ranks the teams as they see them, but there's always been this talk about how things are so unfair for the Group of Five teams. Are you allowed to take -- I don't know if it's any relief? Is it pride? Is it just in some ways, do you step back from this as someone who loves the sport and think that -- and can you appreciate the magnitude of Cincinnati getting in? Do you think it's good for the sport that Cincinnati sort of broke this glass ceiling?**

GARY BARTA: My honest response is the Committee nor



... when all is said, we're done.®

I have talked about the precedent of Cincinnati or a Group of Five. What we did is just watched Cincinnati play all year and watched what they were able to accomplish.

They're the only undefeated team left in the country, and they won their conference championship last night. They beat a really good No. 5 Notre Dame on the road at their place, and it wasn't as though it was a fluke. Cincinnati won that game straight out.

In recent weeks they beat East Carolina, they beat SMU, obviously last night they beat Houston. The Committee doesn't talk about conferences, it doesn't talk about Group of Five, autonomy five. The Committee really focuses on who are the teams in front of us, who have they played, who have they beaten, et cetera. So maybe at some point I'll look back on it, but as of today, we felt Cincinnati was the fourth best team in the country.

**Q. Kind of wanted to pick your brain a little bit on the other at-large bids and the decisions between the Fiesta and Peach Bowl and how the Committee came about placing those teams in those games in those locations?**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, good question. I think you skipped ahead because you know that the Rose Bowl and the Sugar Bowl made their selections, and then the Committee had the opportunity to slot four teams in the last two bowls.

The committee, we talked a lot about what's the best way to go about this, and we felt strongly that the most fair way to go forward was to take -- use our rankings as the determination.

We went in order of the way that they were ranked, so Notre Dame was at 5, Oklahoma State was at 9, so those two were paired together, and then Michigan State was 10 and Pittsburgh was 12, so those two were paired together.

Then we considered geography for which bowl to send each of those pairings to, and we sort of moved the West and the Midwest to the Phoenix area and then moved those teams that were a little bit further east to the ACC country and to the East Coast. That's how we went about it.

**Q. Can you just explain a little bit about how BYU ultimately landed at 13? They had a head-to-head win over Utah. They were just outside the top 12. How did they land at 13 and maybe what could they have done more to maybe creep into the top 12?**

GARY BARTA: The Committee all year long has had a lot of respect and administration for what BYU has done, the

season that they've had. Specifically to your question, the two teams that are ahead of them both won conference championships over the weekend, Utah and Pittsburgh. Utah did lose head to head early on in the season to BYU, but Utah went through a quarterback change when Rising came in, and since him being added to their lineup and since that change, Utah has gone on to win nine of ten and in that stretch in the last three weeks has not only beaten a good Oregon team but beaten them soundly.

It's that combination of things that placed Utah ahead of BYU and also Pittsburgh ahead of BYU. But again, the committee thinks very highly of the season that BYU had.

**Q. I was wondering if you could just tell me a little bit more in depth about the conversation between Alabama and Michigan and the comparisons in the room between those two teams.**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, last night as we had the opportunity to watch -- we had all the information on those two teams coming in. We'd watched them play. They were both in that top grouping going into championship weekend. As we watched Michigan, certainly dominated Iowa and looked strong doing it.

When it came down to it, the win that Alabama had against Georgia -- Georgia had been our No. 1 ranked team all year long, the top defense in the country all year long. So not only did Alabama beat Georgia, but the way that they were able to control the entire game. When the Committee got into the room, and we did have a lot of discussion between those two, there was a strong consensus that Alabama was No. 1 and Michigan was No. 2.

**Q. Just to follow up, some people are just wondering about if and how the injury to Metchie factored into the conversation, as well, because that was part of the protocol along with -- there were coaches in that one particular section was players affecting the postseason, too.**

GARY BARTA: We certainly talked about it, and any time in the sport, not just Metchie, but any student-athlete that I watch get injured, my heart goes out to them because I know how hard they worked to get to that point.

We talked about it. At the end of the day it certainly is one less weapon that Alabama is going to have, but with Bryce Young and Jameson Williams, he ended up with 185 yards, so we talked about it, but we still felt that Alabama came out ahead.

**Q. Gary, I know you talked a little bit about this on the television broadcast, but can you explain how much**



**conversation when doing the seeding goes into the playoff match-ups that those seedings would create?**

GARY BARTA: I think what you're talking about, are you talking specifically 1 through 4?

**Q. Correct.**

GARY BARTA: Yeah, just to elaborate a little bit more, we come into the room and we talk about the teams that we're going to have in that first grouping, and we usually start off with -- we talk about the first six teams. We compare their body of work. Obviously we'd had all the information coming into this weekend, so we focused on three of those teams ended up winning a conference championship, one of them, Georgia, lost in the conference championship.

We don't talk at all about match-ups. We talk about who comes out as No. 1. I just talked about how Alabama ended up ahead of Michigan. But we put Michigan at No. 2, and then we had conversation about where does Georgia fit in that, and then how does Cincinnati fall into place.

So we talk about where everybody fits in terms of our committee's feelings on the ranking order and not about potential match-ups, and then after the ranking, after the top 25 is done, then we start to talk about match-ups, where those games are going to go, as well as start to talk about the bowl placements for the other New Year's Six bowls.

**Q. The thought process that went into ranking Ohio State 6 and ranking Baylor below them at No. 7, despite the fact that Baylor won a Big 12 Championship, Ohio State was obviously a non-champion, and just you and the Committee's overall thoughts this year regarding the Big 12 in general.**

GARY BARTA: Well, I'll start with the second one first. The Committee does not talk about conferences, so we don't break down the strength or weakness of a particular conference. We focus just on school by school, team by team. So that's the answer to the second one.

To your first question, Ohio State is a team that the committee has thought very highly of all season long. They've been in the Top 5. I think at one point they were at No. 2 in the country. Their loss to Michigan moved them down, but they're still if not the best offense in the country, certainly one of the best offenses in the country.

Baylor absolutely gets credit for their win, their championship win. They have wins over top-15 teams.

One of the things the committee did talk about, and that was the loss to TCU. That definitely came up in the conversation.

When the vote occurred, all those things were discussed, and based on those types of factors, the Committee just felt that Ohio State was a better football team than Baylor. Both terrific teams, but that Ohio State was the better team.

BRETT DANIELS: Thank you, Gary, for your work here this season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.