

College Football Playoff

Media Conference

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Bill Hancock

CFP Media Conference

BRETT DANIELS: Welcome, everyone, to our College Football Playoff conference call here this afternoon. Bill Hancock will be joining us, the executive director of the College Football Playoff. He'll have an opening comment to make and then we will open it up to Q & A from the group gathered here.

Bill, I'll turn it over to you at this time.

BILL HANCOCK: Thank you, Brett, and thanks, everyone, for being here on such short notice. It's my pleasure and honor to be able to tell you what you already know, which is that this is an historic day for college football. It's a great day. We're all delighted with the management committee or the board of managers' decision to expand the playoff to 12 teams. This is beginning in 2026, regular season.

But the board did charge the management committee to examine the feasibility of starting early. That will be a big step if the board wants to take a run at it, and that's what we'll be doing.

Overall it's a day for celebration. Not only is this the first day of college football, which is always a happy time, but we're able to add to that the joy of knowing that our board has made this decision today. We're delighted and looking forward to getting to work on it.

I want to salute the board chair, Dr. Mark Keenum from Mississippi State university and also the other 10 board members who worked really hard on this, and we would not have gotten to this point but for the detailed work having been done by our management committee. Those people, as you know, are the 10 conference commissioners and Jack Swarbrick from Notre Dame, who spent hours and hours working on this, and all that time culminated in this terrific announcement today.

Brett, that's all I have by way of opening. I'll turn it back to you.

Q. Bill, does this mean the National Championship



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game likely will be played later in January? And if so, how does that affect Las Vegas's chances of being a host?

BILL HANCOCK: We don't know yet. But signs point to the championship game being played later.

We have another two rounds of a tournament to play over the current two rounds, so there will be four rounds, of course, and the way we're looking at it now, it would be hard to squeeze all that in and still finish on the dates that we're playing on now.

It's premature to talk about any host cities. I just really don't want to go there. We love what we've seen from Las Vegas. We hope some day we'll be able to go there, but we're just going to have to wait and see whether or not the dates fit in for Las Vegas or frankly for any other host city.

One thing, I think you know this, and everybody knows this, I believe, but we are set for host cities in the '24 and '25 regular seasons, that being Atlanta and Miami.

Q. We're talking '26 and beyond, right?

BILL HANCOCK: That's right.

Q. One more thing, when do you think you might decide on the next set of cities?

BILL HANCOCK: We don't know yet. We just really don't know. We will create a calendar for ourselves. The first thing that's ahead for us, though, is to decide the dates of the games, and we'll tackle that over the next several months, and after that we'll be able to kind of roll up our sleeves and begin to look for cities.

We have selected in the past, gosh, one year at a time, and one time we selected three. We just haven't gotten there yet, so I would just say, sit tight.

Q. I was wondering, what were some of the major points that took a while to come to this agreement? Do you have a few that stood out for the committee?

BILL HANCOCK: You know, I think the points have been



... when all is said, we're done.®

reported pretty well that have come up over the last year as the commissioners and Jack and the presidents looked at all these points. They were related to just the format itself, the 12-team format that was adopted today with the six conference champions and six at-large teams. It was something that was talked about a lot.

I think at the end of the day folks just felt like six at-large teams was an important number, and having the best six conference champions also was important, as we just expanded the participation in this event, and we've done that through the board's action today.

Q. Were the future sites between now and '26, were they awarded the game with the understanding, caveat, whatever you want to say, that if the playoff expanded before '26, later into January, that they could accommodate that?

BILL HANCOCK: No, they were awarded based on the current dates. Those dates were what we had to go on when we started the process with the cities, and they were awarded based on the current dates.

Q. I'm just curious if the board provided any sort of direction in terms of the revenue distribution. I know that was a point has been brought up in the past. I was curious if that was discussed at all.

BILL HANCOCK: Hey, no, it was not. That will be one of the items on our list of things to get going on as we start to implement the new format, but no, the board didn't talk about it today.

You know, I would say this: Revenue, sure, there's going to be more revenue. We all know that. There's four new days, four new games. This will be an 11-game event versus a seven-game event. But the board's thrust was on participation, the increased participation, more opportunities for student-athletes and more opportunities for people all around the country to grow this great game.

The board really did focus on the participation.

Q. How do you think this will enhance the regular season? I know that's a debate. And then the second part of my question is for the Group-of-Five commissioners, how important was it for them to get, at least in theory, at least one of those conference champions in if there's six conference champions getting in?

BILL HANCOCK: Well, yeah, that's not really in theory anymore, is it. They will have the champions in, at least one and they might get another one through the at-large

process. Remember, it's the best six conference champions as ranked by the Selection Committee, plus the top six other teams at large.

Would you mind asking me the first part of your question again?

Q. Yeah, just how would you say this is going to enhance the regular season? I know that always seems like a topic of debate with the big games like Michigan-Ohio State, Oklahoma-Texas, and now the possibility that they would have to run that back?

BILL HANCOCK: Yeah, I appreciate that. This will enhance the regular season. More teams will be in the running to be selected for the playoff later in the season, and it will enhance the November part of the season, as well as September, because as you may have seen, the ranking of the teams will continue to be done by Selection Committee, and their protocol will continue unchanged.

We may have to make some changes to that to accommodate the extra teams in the bracketing portion itself, but this will enhance the regular season across the board, across the country, across the calendar. This will be very good for the regular season.

Q. Just curious, obviously this format was first proposed 15 months ago. Can you explain a little bit why you think this is happening now? What changed or what momentum built that got this done now after it seems to have kind of stalled out, going back over the past year?

BILL HANCOCK: You know, the board members represent their schools and also their conferences. It took time for them to evaluate exactly what their people on campus felt about this. It took them time to make a decision, and this was the time.

Dr. Keenum talked to the board about that today, that he said, this is the time. It's time to make a decision. We need to get going on the implementation process. Frankly everyone has had a good, healthy chance to debate this, and it was just time. It was time to move forward.

Q. Obviously it looked like some of the bowls will continue to evolve with the playoff and hosting some of these games. Is there going to be room, do you think, for more bowls to take part? And what do you think this will mean for -- there are dozens of games literally for teams that don't make the playoffs. What do you think this will mean for the future of the rest of the bowl structure, which has obviously been a big part of college football for a long time?



BILL HANCOCK: As far as the years '24 and '25, if the current six bowls want to participate, they will. For '26 and beyond, we haven't determined what the specifications will be. I think most of the expectation is that it will be the same six bowl games, but that will be up to their responses to the specs.

As far as the other bowl games, the bowl system remains strong, remains an opportunity for student-athletes to finish their season in a great environment, and I don't answer this change in the CFP to have a significant effect on the other games.

Q. Since the playoff will now mean more games, will there be any discussion about potential player revenue sharing component to this, as well, this week?

BILL HANCOCK: We are just getting started on this, but I will tell you that the management committee and the board starting last fall were having significant conversations about some way to provide some benefits for the players. We don't know what those will be yet. We just started on the path for this.

But you know, we're obviously doing things for the players now, and the question is what more can be done to be consistent with the current policies nationally.

Remember that players' families have their expenses paid to the games, and certainly the players get a really nice opportunity for mementos from the games. But is there more? I think there probably is, we just haven't dug in deep enough to know what that might be.

Q. After the first round, will those teams be re-seeded then?

BILL HANCOCK: The concept is not for re-seeding but just to stick with a bracket. Good question. You're the first one who's asked me that today. Very good question. But there's no contemplation of re-seeding.

Q. Was there talk about doing that?

BILL HANCOCK: Not by the board today. I'm trying to remember if the management committee had some conversation about that over the last year. I really don't remember. But the working group did talk about it a year and a half ago, and there was no interest in re-seeding.

For one thing, the teams need to know who to scout. They need to know we're going to either play team X or team Y, and they need to know where their destination will be. So no, no contemplation of re-seeding.

Also, the contemplation is pure bracket, and if the bracket results in a rematch of a conference game or even a non-conference game, then so be it. The committee will seed the teams 1 through 12, and if you know 5 will play 12, et cetera, and we will just stick with a pure bracket.

Q. What factors would lead to the early implementation of the new playoff format?

BILL HANCOCK: Available dates in the cities; I think that's the primary one. But we'd also have to talk about dates on campus, specifications for campus hosts. Again, I think primarily it'll be focused on the dates, playing date availability.

Q. When you say the playoff will be expanded potentially early, being 2024 or 2025, does that mean that 2023 has already been ruled out, or is that a very minute possibility?

BILL HANCOCK: Good question. Yeah, 2023 has been ruled out. We'll have a four-team event in 2023.

Q. Have you decided which six bowls will be partners in the playoff process? I assume it's probably the New Year's Six now, but have those been set?

BILL HANCOCK: We know that the current six games will host in 2024 and 2025 if we're able to start that early and if the bowls want to.

As far as 2026, we don't know. I think most of us feel like it'll be the same six bowls, but that will depend on their responses to our specifications.

Q. This question may have already been answered, but was there any talk of expanding to more than 12 teams, like as far as 16?

BILL HANCOCK: Certainly there had been plenty of talk about that in the last year and a half. The working group, they had 63 options as I recall, everywhere from two up to 32, which none of those stayed on the board very long.

But yeah, there was a lot of talk about more, and the management committee and the board both came around to 12 being the right number, 12 being the number to provide more participation, and I think that was the key.

Q. Regarding those first-round playoff games and the expanded format, did the board discuss any qualifications for the other sites that may be deemed by the higher ranking seeds when considering playing at their home stadium or those other sites as stated in



the release?

BILL HANCOCK: We haven't talked about specific, I'll call it, qualifications or in our term it's probably going to be specifications, but we do know that the home team could have the opportunity to suggest another site. Frankly, I don't know of a lot of really good reasons why a home team might want to do that. I think their fans are going to want to see this playoff game at their own stadium.

If you think about it, this will be one of the most significant games ever in those stadiums, obviously four first-round games per season. It'll be delightful for the fans of those four teams.

But we did want to make the opportunity available, in case a team had a conflict or something happened to their stadium or maybe they wouldn't have hotel rooms, to decide to move somewhere else.

Q. I wanted to follow up on the question I asked about the six bowl game hosts for the quarterfinals and semifinals. You said, "meet our specifications." Can you delve into what you mean by that, what specifications you're referring to?

MARK KEENUM: We will have specifications of what we expect from the bowl games, from all the hosts, but particularly for the quarterfinals and semifinals, ranging anywhere from stadium capacity to hotel availability to the economic model. We haven't developed those specs yet, but we will, and that's generally the kind of thing that will be in the specs.

Q. Do you get the sense that there would be some sort of provision to avoid rematches in the first round of the expanded playoff?

MARK KEENUM: No, I don't. On the contrary, it'll be straight seeding and straight bracketing, so 5 will play 12, even though 5 and 12 might have played two weeks ago. That's just like the current bracket. 1 is going to play 4, and if it happens to be a rematch, then that just goes with the territory. It's going to be pure seeding by the committee.

Q. The teams that host the first-round games, is it 100 percent their decision if they want to play on campus or move that to a neutral site? Or will there be somebody involved with the playoff that has any input on that decision?

BILL HANCOCK: We haven't talked about that yet, so it's premature for me to talk too much about it. My speculation is that the site would be subject to the -- the new sites

being able to agree with the specifications, and then I do think that CFP would be able to say no, that just doesn't work, maybe because they don't have enough space in the press box or the locker room is insufficient or whatever the case might be. But yeah, I would think that the CFP would have some ability to say, you know, that place just won't work.

Again, it's premature for me to speculate because we just haven't talked about it yet.

I would say thanks again to everyone for being on the call in a busy weekend, and we're just delighted by this historic day for college football.

Over to you, Brett.

BRETT DANIELS: Thank you for your time today. We'd like to thank everyone for joining the call. We look forward to talking to you throughout the month of November into December when we do our weekly Selection Committee calls. It'll be here before we know it. Everyone enjoy weekend No. 1, and glad to have football going.

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