

College Football Playoff Media Conference

Thursday, December 1, 2022
Grapevine, Texas, USA

Bill Hancock

CFP Media Conference

BRETT DANIELS: I'd like to thank everyone for joining us. I know it's been a long journey, but hopefully we are reaching the end of it now and wanted to make sure we gathered you guys all together with the good news here today.

At this point in time we've got Bill on the line. We don't really have any opening comments. I believe everybody has our release. We'll let you guys kind of get in the queue to start asking questions.

Q. A bit of business: There's been a lot of talk about where this new inventory is going to end up on TV. We know 2026 is a different deal. What are the possibilities, if any, that the new inventory doesn't end up on ESPN? Could it go to another network for '24 and '25?

BILL HANCOCK: ESPN has the opportunity to broadcast these games, and we're just into this today, of course, and so what we don't know yet is whether they will exercise their right. We're just going to have to wait and see.

Q. What exactly did the Rose Bowl amend? What did they need to agree to to pave the way for early expansion?

BILL HANCOCK: Well, thanks to all of you for being on this call, and I will say off the record, I know you are disappointed that we're not standing in the Grand Hyatt at DFW to have this, but you'll just have to get over it; what can I say? Okay, end of levity.

We had conversations with all the bowls, and frankly, it was a matter of the Rose Bowl having been the last one that came in. Remember that all six of the bowl games and the two championship host cities were all involved in the change for '24 and '25. For the Rose Bowl Game for '24 and '25, as you know, they will play in their same historical time window under their same television contract.

Their change will be that they won't necessarily have Big



COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

Ten and Pac-12, although the Selection Committee will endeavor to assign the higher ranked of those two conferences to the Rose Bowl just like we will with the Big 12 and SEC to the Sugar Bowl and the ACC to the Orange Bowl.

We just didn't get into year 13 much. We didn't get into 2026 much. Nothing is locked in for 2026 and beyond.

We'll discuss that when the time comes. I would say that it would be in everyone's best interest for any CFP that happens in the Rose Bowl to kick off around 2:00 Pacific. We do know that the '24 and '25 quarterfinals will kick at 2:00-ish Pacific. With my comment there I'm really talking about 2026 and beyond.

But again, I have to emphasize that nothing is in place, nothing is locked in, nothing is guaranteed for 2026 and beyond.

Q. Bill, the release says the specific dates of the games have not yet been determined. Obviously a bunch of first-round games on Saturday would be going up against the NFL. When is the latest on when those decisions could be made and the role TV competition plays into that?

BILL HANCOCK: We haven't determined a timetable for making that decision. We'll make it in conjunction with the television rightsholder, but as the release said, that's our plan is to play that weekend, what is it, the 21st? But I can't really speculate about when we'll get to that.

You know, these games are, what, two years and one month away. In the one sense that's not a lot of time to get ready for a new event. In the other sense it's plenty of time to decide things like game dates.

Q. I was wondering if there is any more talk now that this is official about moving the regular season. I know there have been discussions about week zero. Does this bring that back into the conversation? The second question is how, if at all, competition-wise, schedule-wise, does this change the regular season in college football?



... when all is said, we're done.®

BILL HANCOCK: Let me take the second part first. I don't see a significant change for how it affects regular season other than more games in November will be more meaningful than they have been because the more teams will be in contention for the 12-team tournament.

As far as week zero, I know those conversations will continue. No one is very far down the road on that. But I know the conversations will continue.

Q. Does Pac-12 membership or even existence impact anything for them in '24-'25?

BILL HANCOCK: We haven't talked about that. The current contract, however, for CFP will stay in place, and those, of course, are for the conferences that you know. So there hasn't been any conversation about anything different for that.

Q. Could you provide a little more detail -- go ahead.

BILL HANCOCK: I was just going to add another clause to say I don't expect that conversation to happen.

Q. Could you provide a little more clarity on the revenue distribution for '24 and '25? Is this essentially playing for units like in basketball?

BILL HANCOCK: Our revenue distribution philosophy will continue, which is game fees, overall base fee, the academic performance fees, and philosophically all that will continue. There will have to be some changes, obviously, with more teams participating, more games, but yeah, philosophically it won't change.

Q. So the pot that exists right now will get that number, whatever it is, that's on the website now? I think it changes year to year. That won't change?

BILL HANCOCK: Well, the number will change, the percentages won't.

Q. That sounds like essentially the same; I've seen it reported otherwise.

BILL HANCOCK: Frankly I hadn't read a lot of reporting on this, but that's what it'll be. Generally the same, the same philosophy, basically the same percentages, and there will be more expenses with more sites, although there should be more revenue with more sites. Anytime you go from six games to 11, well, that'll provide more opportunities. But there will be more teams to get team shares, more teams' expenses will have to be paid.

Q. You can probably talk about this. I know early on

Bob Bowlsby said that in a 12-team playoff on November 1st he thought there would be 30 to 35 teams with hope. You guys have to have dug down on that. What is that number? That's part of this is the access.

BILL HANCOCK: Yeah, we did dig into that. We did dig into that. That was a number that we sort of speculated about. Of course it varies from year to year and you sort of have to wind up taking an average, but that's kind of the ballpark number that we anticipate.

Q. I know the last 18 months have probably been long and frustrating, but can you describe just the last two to three weeks where you had agreed pretty much on every single other thing except the Rose Bowl issue? Was there ever a time the last two or three weeks that you thought this would not happen, and how tense and frustrating for you was it?

BILL HANCOCK: I never gave up. Last January in Indianapolis was frustrating, as you know. You were there. Really February when we figured we just weren't going to be able to expand was disappointing for a lot of people, but I never gave up.

I was joking about the meetings that we've had since September 2 when the board approved the expansion. Gosh, I don't even know how many there were. You'll have to help me on that, eight or ten or more. But it was a matter of whittling down that baguette, if you will, from the end, and just hey, we've got this handled, so we can cross that off our list. What's next? Well, there's four things next. What's next? We just checked off one. We're down to three.

I was encouraged all along because everybody in the room wanted to see this expansion happen early, and so they were willing to keep working, roll up their sleeves and keep working on checking off those things from the end until we got down to the last ones that have been publicized.

You know, the Rose Bowl just happened to be the last one. There were many other decisions that had to be made, and it just happened to be with the timing that the Rose Bowl was the last one. I don't think the most important, I don't think any of the decision were any more important than others, but it was just kind of a matter of working down from the ends down to the middle and down to where we are today.

Q. About the Rose Bowl, any concessions or guarantees given to the Rose Bowl for the playoff that starts in 2026 and beyond?



BILL HANCOCK: There's no guarantees for 2026 and beyond. Nothing is locked in. We will address all the bowls on the same basis when that time comes. But I would repeat, because I think this is important, I would repeat that I think it would be in anyone's best interest for any CFP games that the Rose Bowl host to happen on New Year's Day in their traditional window.

Q. I wanted to clarify on the earlier conversation when you said those conversations will continue about week zero; are you still talking about 2026 like you were in the Big Ten lobby, or is that a possibility for '24, '25, to move the season?

BILL HANCOCK: I really can't say about that. That's beyond the CFP issue. That will happen among all the conferences at the NCAA level, the commissioners kind of not wearing their CFP hats but wearing their college football broadly. It wouldn't be appropriate for me to speculate about it.

Q. The second is a more big picture view historically from all the roles that you've had over all the years, how monumental is this change to the sports postseason in comparison to all the changes that it's gone through?

BILL HANCOCK: Oh, man, that is a great question. I went for a lot of years thinking the creation of the BCS was the biggest change, the most significant change that ever happened in college football. I still clung to that even after the CFP started.

This one is significant. I don't know that we'll know for sure from this perspective like 12 hours later. I don't know that we know for sure. We will in eight or ten years. But absolutely it's significant.

But to rank those, to have a four-team playoff of those biggest changes, I don't know, I think I'll still start with the creation of the BCS. The BCS for the first time gave an opportunity to decide a national champion on the field every year, not just at the whims of the bowl pairings. Golly, what a significant change that was, and we certainly wouldn't have the CFP four or 12 if we hadn't had the BCS.

Q. I wanted to ask, considering obviously nothing is set for '26 and beyond, does that mean that it is possible that the conversations could be had about the potential of tweaking the sites for games in the quarterfinals and in particular the conversation about whether it should be bowl games or for them to remain on campuses?

BILL HANCOCK: We will learn a lot in '24 and '25.

There's no doubt about that. I don't want to speculate about what might change and what might not change. It's way premature to address that.

But I know we're going to learn a lot about our event in the first couple of years.

Q. Another Rose Bowl question. I know you're saying that they were the last issue to be resolved, but because they were potentially able to hold this up and cost the whole effort of early expansion, was there a growing frustration among presidents and commissioners or anyone that they may not want to work with the Rose Bowl if they were not able to get this done for '24 and '25? Was there a feeling that if the Rose Bowl did not work with you guys on this that they would not be part of it in the future contract?

BILL HANCOCK: Oh, there was some things said about that, and some of them were reported, so I don't need to emphasize about that. I would just say that all along, everyone wanted the Rose Bowl to be a part of this for 11 and 12. Well, we wanted -- excuse me, '24 and '25 to happen, and we wanted the Rose Bowl to be a part of it. Everyone wanted that.

We had some things to work through. We worked through them frankly collegially and in a really good spirit of communications.

I would say kind of to that question is that I wanted to re-emphasize that all the bowls stepped up, all six, and it's no secret that we were down to the final minutes of the fourth quarter and there was no overtime. If we hadn't reached an agreement, there's no question in my mind that we would have continue the four-team playoff through '24 and '25, no question in my mind. But we're here to celebrate the fact that we did reach agreement.

I feel a little bit like every coach who says, we're going to celebrate this for 24 hours and then we'll get together and we'll get started working on next week. That's what'll happen here. There are lots of details to put together for year 11. But I'm delighted that we get the opportunity to put those details together.

Q. This is kind of speculative but I'll ask anyway. There's been talk about sites and things along those lines going into 2026, but do you view '24 and '25 or maybe the presidents view '24 and '25 as a way to look at the entire thing, including the format, including the number of teams, including who gets in automatically, are there any assurances that it will be 12-6-6 going into 2026, or am I looking ahead too much there?

BILL HANCOCK: I think for me to answer that, the best way to say it is everyone is solid on what we have. Everyone is solid on 12-6-6. There hasn't been any conversation about changing that.

I would be stunned if that were to change.

The sites, again, I just think we're going to learn a lot in '24 and '25. There will come a time, though, where it's too late to change for 2026, but I say let's get into this on the sites and let's see what happens.

But no change. I want to emphasize this. No change in that 12-6-6 is at all contemplated.

Q. College football went a century without ever doing a playoff and then the BCS is kind of a form of playoff, and then in 25 years we've gone from two to four to 12. I'm wondering your perspective on how this moves so quickly, and do you find that this has moved quickly considering relative to college football?

BILL HANCOCK: My personal feeling is that yes, it has moved pretty quickly relative to dating back to, what, 1869, Rutgers and Princeton? Things have changed. CFP is, has been, will be great for the game, short and long-term. 12 will be great because more teams will participate.

Yeah, times change. Things have moved pretty quickly relative to the last 153 years.

Q. I might as well just get this out of the way now: When will we move to 16 teams, Bill?

BILL HANCOCK: (Laughs.) Next question? Kidding. Just kidding.

12-6-6 is solid, solid, solid, in the minds of the presidents and the commissioners. Solid. Did I say solid?

Q. When is it too late? You mentioned at some point it's going to be too late to change a whole lot about 2026 and beyond. When do the conversations start on year 13, 2026 and beyond, and when will it be too late? We're two years out, obviously, '24 right now, and I know it's later than you wanted to, but when do you start talking about 2026 seriously, and when is the deadline there for that format?

BILL HANCOCK: Too soon to speculate. It's just too soon to speculate. We're very comfortable with what we have. A lot of time and conversation went into the format that we have that you all are so familiar with, and everybody is happy with it.

This is going to be a great thing, and we're really not talking about 2026 yet.

Q. This has changed so quickly, and a lot of the concern over the years about larger fields, whatever, is devaluing the regular season, going back to BCS or even pre-BCS days, do you feel like the regular season has gotten more or less important, and do you feel like this 12-team system will keep it that way, and are there any concerns about it changing in the future?

BILL HANCOCK: I think yes, the regular season has become more important. The game of college football is certainly very healthy. Look at the viewership. Look at the number of people in the stands. I think the 12-team tournament will only enhance that.

You know, I think about 12 -- people ask me about 12, what is it about 12? For me it's one word: Participation. More student-athletes will have a chance to compete for the National Championship.

I talked to an athletic director this morning who happens to be looking for a coach. This was an AD from what's formerly known as a Group of Five conferences, and he said, I can tell my coach now, come here and you will be able to participate and compete to play in the National Championship, guaranteed.

The guaranteed spot for those conferences is a terrific thing for them. CFP has been good for them. This will be even better.

Q. You just said formerly known as the Group of Five, so I think is that term going to be now officially dead in 2024?

BILL HANCOCK: Well, it's not a term that I really like to use too much anyway. What does it even mean? Remember the old term BCS conferences? What did that mean? So I'll sort of change the "I" and I'll refer to "people."

Q. Is Kristina Johnson still on the board of managers?

BILL HANCOCK: She is. Yes.

Q. For how much longer?

BILL HANCOCK: That will be up to the conference. We've had board members who had announced their intent to resign. Eric Barron was the last one, who stayed on the board clear through the end of their term at the university, and I hope Kristina will do that.

Q. Typically in the industry there's, whatever it is, a 30-day exclusive negotiating window to keep a television, certainly ESPN has to have one. When is that?

BILL HANCOCK: We don't know yet. There is one. It is 30 days. We don't know when we'll begin.

Q. It's not written into the contract?

BILL HANCOCK: No, actually it isn't. We can decide when to begin that.

Q. So that's a CFP thing?

BILL HANCOCK: Mutual. It's mutual.

BRETT DANIELS: Appreciate everyone's time today as well as over the past 18 months. Hopefully we'll be looking more in the future to give you additional details. Enjoy conference championship weekend, and look forward to talking to you guys on Sunday.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports