

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

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Jim Phillips Ph.D

Commissioner Press Conference



COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Good afternoon and welcome to the 2024 ACC Football Kickoff. Let me begin by thanking each of you for joining us in Charlotte. To look out and see so many familiar faces is terrific.

To the media in attendance, thanks for your coverage of the ACC, our championships and events. To our television partners, we are so appreciative of your continued support and exposure. I want to especially recognize and thank Jimmy Pitaro, Burke Magnus, Ros Durant, Nick Dawson, Dave Roberts, Michael Schiffman, and Jeremy Michaels, and the entire ESPN and ACCN teams.

As a league, we are fortunate to have the most amazing partners, and many of them are here today, including Eric Poms of the Capital One Orange Bowl, which has been the home to the ACC.

In addition I'd like to recognize lieutenant general Richard Clark who recently began his tenure as the new College Football Playoff executive director. As well as bowl season executive director Nick Carparelli, who has done a fantastic job in that role since 2019.

I'd like to take a minute to thank my staff. They have been amazing and have worked tirelessly to support this league each and every day. There's no better representatives for the ACC than this group of exceptional people.

Since my first ACC Football Kickoff, the ACC student-athlete advisory committee has conducted its summer meetings during this event. There's no group of individuals more important to our conference. I'd like to have them stand and give them a round of applause.

Again, we are extremely pleased to have you here in Charlotte just blocks away from our league headquarters on the 12th floor of the Legacy Union building. We look forward to hosting you tomorrow for the reception in the lobby of our building.

At this time last year, we were preparing move into our new offices. This year I can confidently state that our first year

in Charlotte has exceeded all expectations.

There's great excitement and anticipation surrounding the year ahead for our conference, and this is a tribute to the exceptional leadership at our institutions, specifically the ACC board of directors and our directors of athletics.

We're thrilled to have Cal, SMU, and Stanford join the ACC. With our 18 world-class member institutions, the league's profile is only enhanced academically and athletically.

Our footprint is now national, spanning coast to coast. The ACC has a presence in each of the five most populated states in the country. No other Power Four conference is in more than two.

In addition, the ACC footprint now includes four of the 10 largest DMAs.

In February, I began my fourth year as commissioner. It's hard to argue that there has been a time in college athletics that has seen more change than what's currently transpiring in our industry.

As a leader in college sports, the ACC is well positioned to positively affect and embrace future change. In a time of great change, what remains constant is the greatness of the ACC. National championships, prestigious academic institutions, tremendous student-athletes, and a remarkable future.

This past year the ACC won seven NCAA titles for the first time in ACC history; seven different schools won national championships. Over the past three years, the ACC has won a combined 23 national titles by nine different schools.

The 23 NCAA titles lead all conferences in sponsored sports.

The ACC has won seven or more national titles in each of the last three years, the best run in ACC history.

Beyond athletics, our member institutions continue to be the national leaders in all academic metrics, including U.S.



News and World Report, best colleges, NCAA graduation success rates, and academic performance rates. Those things matter.

Financially, as reported in the most recent conference 990, from the 2022/23 fiscal year, the ACC surpassed \$700 million in total revenue for the first time in league history with a 14% increase with distributable revenue from the year prior.

Each ACC school received an average of \$45 million in annual distribution, a league record. We expect those numbers to only grow when the 2023/24 revenues and distributions are released.

The ACC is one of the top three conferences in both overall revenue generated and per-school distribution. We fully expect that will remain in the years to come.

As a conference, we continue to aggressively focus our daily efforts on exploring innovative opportunities related to revenue, technology, television, data and analytics and more.

To give you a small sampling of what has transpired in the past year, the ACC generated an estimated \$600 million in new incremental revenue over the term of the existing media agreements through expansion.

Added Dr. Pepper as the newest official sponsor as part of a new multi-year agreement with the ACC and Disney advertising. Enhanced our efforts in the areas of video highlight technology through a conference-wide adoption of WSC Sports, which utilizes AI to generate automated video highlight clips available to each of our institutions.

Exploring data opportunities across all consumer low latency live events and sports performance, all intended to add value to our member institutions and to the conference.

Also as announced last week, the new collaboration with Apple will allow coaching staffs to have more access to information that will enhance game strategy.

Tripled courtside seating and hospitality offerings at the men's basketball tournament. We'll further expand on that this year at Charlotte.

Implemented new ticket and hospitality offerings at our ACC championship events.

Extended our partnership with Sirius XM that provides a 24/7 satellite radio platform to our fans, one of only three conferences in their portfolio.

And extended our conference-wide office contract with Nike.

We have also partnered with Integrity Compliance 360, which provides each ACC member institution access to integrity monitoring technology, in-depth analysis of the betting landscape, and allows our schools to opt in for additional resources.

The ongoing emphasis in college athletics surrounding revenue generation and financial prioritization has never been greater. As a conference, we have been and will continue to be aggressively evaluating all areas that potential enhance our of conference financials for immediate and long-term future of the ACC.

As has been reported, our board of directors formally adapted an innovative and progressive new revenue distribution model to begin this year.

ACC schools that achieve success by participating in the College Football Playoff, finishing in the top 25 of CFP rankings, participating in bowl games, and receiving a bid as well as advancing in the NCAA men's basketball tournament, will be financially rewarded.

What this equates to is a range of \$20 to \$25 million in revenues that can be earned this coming year by any school based on its success, and is in addition to the annual per-school distribution for any member of our league.

It was truly a remarkable year for the ACC, financially, competitively, academically, and beyond. We will only build on these successes and priorities in the future.

As ACC commissioner, father of multiple college student-athletes, someone who has spent his career as a servant to college athletics, tireless advocate for student-athletes, the opportunities ahead of us are exciting and critically important.

The ACC has played a vital and leading role in national discussions and in finding solutions and resolutions to a myriad of issues, including the proposed settlement of House and the related legal cases.

As the ongoing legal process is hopefully brought to its conclusion and a new stage will we build a more sustainable college athletics, the ACC remains in discussions regarding implementation of the proposed settlement.

Those discussions have and will continue to include



coaches, administrators and our peer conferences.

I would like to recognize NCAA president Charlie Baker in his efforts to modernize college sports. Not an easy assignment, for sure.

Over the next year we will be laser focused on the proposed new model, providing clarity to our schools and student-athletes, and ensuring ACC memberships not only compete, but thrive in the future of college athletics. Creativity and innovation will be a key and the ACC will be leaders in this new frontier.

Staying on the national landscape, I remain directly involved in our Congressional efforts in Washington, D.C. In March I participated in the NIL college sports roundtable with Nick Saban, Senator Ted Cruz, and the Cavinder twins, among others.

While the proposed resolution of the House case is one step, we must remain steadfast for federal regulation. This includes actively discussing with Congress a national solution that will create a fairness and clarity around student-athlete NIL opportunities. A declaration solidifying our athletes are students, not employees. And narrow liability protection so we may continue to modernize college sports without the threat of ongoing lawsuits.

We must stay proactive with those in Congress who understand the immense value of access to higher education that is provided by college sports, and that it is necessary to provide these opportunities to all student-athletes, not just a few.

As I turn my attention to the year ahead, I must directly address the ongoing disputes with two of our members about the contracts they each signed twice and whether they will honor those agreements.

With multiple ongoing legal cases, there are limits to what I can say. But I can state that we will fight to protect the ACC and our members for as long as it takes. We are confident in this league and that it will remain a premier conference in college athletics for the long-term future.

These disputes continue to be extremely damaging, disruptive, and incredibly harmful to the league, as well as overshadowing our student-athletes and the incredible successes taking place on the field and within the conference.

People feel passionate about athletics. They feel particularly passionate about college athletics at their respective schools. This passion is what makes college athletics so special.

But this passion can also lead to personal attacks. John Swofford is a decent and honorable man and is widely respected in our industry. He led this conference with a steady hand for over two decades, and did so through consensus and compromise.

The fact is that every member of this conference willingly signed the Grant of Rights and unanimously, and quite frankly, eagerly agreed to our current television contract and the launch of the ACC Network.

The ACC, our collective membership and conference office, deserves better. The support for our student-athletes, coaches and programs is extraordinary. That will continue despite these disruptions.

We intend to continue to fight every day for the ACC and its members, and to do so in a way that I hope makes our membership proud. Where there are disagreements or disputes, I intend to continue to deal with them in a respectful and honorable fashion.

The ACC deserves nothing less.

The ACC will remain a healthy and vibrant conference that competes at the highest level.

This is a monumental summer for the ACC, which kicked off with the July 1st celebration as the ACC became an 18-member conference. This past weekend we held our third annual ACC Unity Tour.

It was an honor to once again be part of this important initiative which was held in Charleston, South Carolina. We will remain committed to prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives as they are important to our past, present and future.

At the end of this week, we will all turn our attention to one of the world's brightest stages with the start of the 2024 summer Olympics in Paris. Overall, more than 290 student-athletes and coaches representing six continents and 54 countries will compete for our now 18 schools. The U.S. Olympic team will be represented by 97 current or former athletes with 40 returning and 57 first-time Olympians.

On multiple U.S. Olympic teams, rosters are comprised of a significant number of athletes from current ACC institutions. This includes anywhere from 25 to 60 percent of swimming, women's soccer, field hockey, fencing and others.

I hope you are all as excited as I am to root for our ACC



student-athletes and coaches. We certainly wish them all the best of luck.

Before I turn our attention to the exciting upcoming football season of ACC football, let me take just a moment to talk about our extraordinary television partners.

We appreciate our ongoing partnership with Disney and ESPN. We are collectively focused on working together for the long-term future.

Our relationship has never been stronger. We are proud to be aligned with the most innovative and forward-thinking partners in the business.

As one of only three conferences with a dedicated fully distributed national network, ACCN is a differentiator. Eight years ago the announcement about the future launch of ACC Network took place at this same event here in Charlotte. It was a time of great celebration as representatives from ESPN, administrators and coaches from each of our campuses and the leadership from the conference were all on-site and participated in the announcement.

This was an enthusiastically celebrated event across the entire membership as well as the media leading into the official launch of ACC Network on August 22nd, 2019.

This August ESPN, Disney, the ACC Network and the ACC will recognize the fifth anniversary of the ACC Network with a celebration in Bristol. This is just another significant milestone for our collective partnership that only continues to prosper.

From achieving full distribution, to the combination of new corporate and title sponsors, to the creation of Road Trip, taking the huddle on the road, countless other initiatives and resolutions including the integration of our new schools in the states of Texas and California, we really look forward to what's ahead.

As you are aware, we enter the first season of a historic 12-team expanded College Football Playoff. Over the 10-year history of the four-team CFP, we have won the second most national titles, and we're only one of two conferences to have a .500 or better winning percentage in CFP games.

As the commissioner of the ACC, I was at the table with my fellow colleagues as we hammered out the structure and logistics for the next two seasons. Beginning this year, the enhanced CFP provides opportunities for several ACC teams to annually earn a spot in the CFP field.

To be sure, there are still details to be worked out with the CFP beyond the next two years, and I look forward to working collaboratively with my fellow commissioners.

What we do know is beginning in 2026, the ACC champion will have an automatic entry into the Playoff. The expanded CFP is a good thing for the ACC.

At this time I want to showcase ACC football starting with a quick video.

(Video Shown.)

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: There is significant anticipation surrounding ACC football and our 17 football programs will all look to accomplish greatness.

With 33 days until week zero, we know the focus will be on what's ahead for this year. ACC football has the toughest non-conference schedule in the country. 27 games against Power Four opponents, including Notre Dame. Nine non-conference games against teams ranked in the final 2023 AP top 25 poll; 10 non-conference games against teams in the ESPN's 2024 Way-Too-Early top 25. All of these are the most of any conference. We have elite coaching leadership, six ACC head coaches named to the 2024 Dodd Trophy pre-season watch list. No conference has more.

Two of the three active coaches in the country to win a national title reside here in the ACC: Mack Brown and Dabo Swinney.

The combination of our proven veteran coaches combined with our dynamic young coaches is incredibly powerful.

The ACC is the conference of quarterbacks. 13 enter the season with over 20 career touchdown passes and 3500 career passing yards.

Eight quarterbacks are projected to start week one in the 2024 NFL season; 25% of NFL teams.

And since 2018, at least one quarterback has been drafted in the first round in five different drafts, the only conference that can state that claim.

ACC football has the nation's top returning passer and receiver in yards per game last year in Cam Ward of Miami and Caullin Lacy of Louisville. Plus the second returning rusher in Omarion Hampton from North Carolina.

Additionally, when you look at the CFP top 25 rankings over the last four years, there are only seven programs that have been in each, with Clemson and NC State



representing the ACC. No conference has more teams that can state that claim.

The combination of our preeminent players and elite leadership only furthers expectations on what's ahead for our individual teams and conference. There's not a more exciting collection of teams in the country than in the ACC.

On the football innovation front, the ACC remains committed to embracing the use of technology to elevate performance of our student-athletes, teams, officials, and more.

Between our state-of-the-art ACC Game Day Operation Center and working with apple to bring iPad technology to the sidelines and our coaches' booths, we are proud of our unparalleled prioritization of technology and the positive impact it will have for our league.

Finally, the season kicks off in week zero. SMU will open against Nevada, while? Florida State and Georgia Tech will meet in the Aer Lingus Classic in Dublin. I will head to Ireland and anticipate there will be many of our partners on that flight, as ESPN's College GameDay will broadcast live before the ACC's first league game of the year, marking the first time the pregame show will travel outside of the United States.

Upon returning from Ireland, we will immediately jump into week one, which features all 17 teams competing; 15 non-conference games will be played Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before leading into our annual Labor Day Monday night game.

The ACC regular season undoubtedly will be one of fierce competition as teams contend for the opportunity to play in the annual ACC football championship game right here in Charlotte.

As announced last week, the game will again be televised in primetime on ABC before our teams head to the College Football Playoff and represent the ACC in our strong lineup of bowls as part of bowl season.

Make no mistake, I am extremely confident and enthusiastic about ACC football. I'm hopeful I was able to address what I knew would be some of your questions. I'm happy to take any of those questions from the floor.

THE MODERATOR: We'll move into the Q&A portion.

Q. You just talked about how the lawsuits are damaging and disruptive to the ACC. How does this not continue to become a distraction as we try to turn the focus to football?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: We've had six months of disruption. I think we've handled it incredibly well.

So I think it's important for me to lead our group in particular, not only our staff but more importantly our schools, to compartmentalize the legal piece of what's happening and not let it distract us or take us away from what we're all trying to do. That is to provide great experiences for our student-athletes, teams, coaches, put the focus back on the fields and areas of competition.

But I will tell you there isn't a day that doesn't go by that I don't spend some time on the legal cases. I don't think that's going to change. We're really fortunate to have hired Pearl Houck, our first internal GC, and have great legal teams in a myriad of places.

We have proven that you have to move forward even with these types of distractions and really important issues that are part of your daily lives.

Q. You've spoken in the past about your concerns about college athletics becoming a gated community. The House settlement, as proposed, a lot of the money in that settlement is going to go to Power Five athletes; a lot of the money is coming from the NCAA from schools that don't even play football. Do you have any concerns about how that would exacerbate the divides in college athletics? Do you think the settlement is equitable?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: I think another really good question.

Here is what I would say. I'll take the second part first.

It is to me equitable relative to who's playing for that, et cetera. We've all been part of this association. This idea that it's football only and should be driven by the football coaches, I do not agree with that.

I think the board of directors emphasized that they would not have signed off on that if they felt differently. There's shared pain on this.

The NCAA, I give our new president Charlie Baker a lot of credit. He's trying to take the most of it on.

As it relates to the first part of the question, I talked about that a couple years ago. I don't think everybody liked what I had to say in that particular forum. It's okay. But that has been kind of our history of being under the tent kind of together.



But you're seeing some clear separation. I think there will be choices to be made. That's what we're working through right now with this proposed settlement. There's so many steps that affect the long-term future, but you don't know what's future is going to be until you start to get into it.

For example, we're talking about roster sizes. That's been well communicated out there. I'm not going to talk anything about that. But that's one element of it.

The distribution of dollars will be different for the first time in a real meaningful way for our student-athletes. I'm excited for our student-athletes. As I said before, in my own family, for Laura and I, we know what having student-athletes in your house looks like. So I'm really happy for them.

This is a good thing for student-athletes. There's going to be added significant pressure for each of our schools, not only in the ACC but around the country, to continue to try to provide broad-based programming, Title IX, all the things we believe in. It will be a challenge.

I'm excited about it. I really am. The final thing I'll say to wrap up is, this is what I would call a reset. I said this from the very beginning. I said several months ago when it looked like we had some kind of agreement. This is a reset in college sports.

It doesn't mean that college sports still can't be great and still as interesting and all the rest of it. But it's a reset in the structure of it.

I look forward to being a part of those discussions and help lead us as we move forward.

Q. You mentioned the ACC's exploration of revenues, the \$600 million in incremental revenue from expansion. Have you and/or the board and ADs discussed private capital, private equity, naming rights? If so, what have those discussions been like?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Appreciate that.

I'm not going to go into internal conversations that we've had with the board. But I wouldn't be doing my job if we aren't exploring every area that's available.

I know that it gets out there. Sometimes folks want it to get out there, et cetera. We've done a really nice job of kind of keeping things together in a private way.

I would just say we are and we have continued to look at all options as it relates to revenue.

I'm proud of two things in particular that I mentioned in my notes about revenue generation. Revenue isn't just there. You can't just kind of will it. What we did with expansion, with three new schools, I think really will help our conference.

Then what we're doing with success initiatives. This is before the litigation even began. That was something that we wanted to do. I felt like we needed to do. The board was terrific. It didn't have unanimity at first.

As we walk through it, it will reward the teams that have the most success. It's not an absolute correlation, but those that invest more have a higher chance to have success. We all know that. Doesn't guarantee it.

That will be good, a nice incentive and realization of success when we distribute for the first time of any conference, at least in the Power Four, in a disproportionate way.

Q. I would say your comments to start were probably a little more emotional and forceful sounding. I'm curious if you think this is something you need to change the narrative a little bit or talking points a little bit? If so, what gives you so much optimism about the future of the league, with or without Florida State and Clemson?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Forceful moments deserve forceful support and leadership. I don't know that I've changed at all other than I stand by everything I've said from the moment on the first interview I did around the Orange Bowl on ACCN to today.

This is a really important time for the conference. Either you believe in what has been signed or you don't. We are going to do everything we can to protect and to fight the league because I see a group of student-athletes there. We now have 12,200 student-athletes.

This has been a league that started way before me, 71 years ago, and it will be a league that will be around a long time after I depart. This league deserves us to take this really serious issue and to handle it appropriately.

What gives me promise and conviction about it? Because I understand I think these schools, I think I understand where we're going. We've made some really good adjustments.

This conference is bigger than any one school, or schools.

Q. You spoke on students and not employees in fairness and clarity. There's been a lot of coaches



around the country that have mentioned their concern about NIL, the revenue gap. How can they compete with other teams when it comes to NIL if they don't have the necessary funds to match Clemson, Alabama or Notre Dame. How can teams compete if they don't have necessary funds to do so?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: A couple things. I want to just talk about student versus employee, and a couple reasons why I don't believe that's necessary. I'm against it.

Taxation, I don't think parents and families want to be taxed on scholarship, room and board, book, tuition, travel, equipment, health, medical, all of those benefits, right?

Termination. You're an employee. There's something called termination of employment. I don't think student-athletes should have to face that, right?

We have nearly 25,000 international students that are on visas. There's a direct conflict as it relates to them working in the United States and being declared employees.

There's a lot of reasons why.

But ultimately we want to continue to provide student-athletes with benefits. You see the evolution. The Alston Awards, cost of attendance, name, image and likeness, now the House settlement case.

It's really a good time to be a student-athlete from a benefits standpoint. I think there's a lot of pressures. I think they have a lot of burdens, pressures, expectations. Social media is really difficult. But that's the employment piece of it.

The other part of your question as it relates to how do you close the gap, how do you be competitive. The ACC's never been a league that's led in revenue generation and distribution. We just haven't. But we've had an incredible span of success.

This will be about creativity and innovation for our schools and for our league. I tried to go over some of the things we're trying to help the league with and our member schools. I know we'll be able to do it.

The good thing about this is these will be local decisions, decisions made by our 18 schools about how much they want to participate in that 22% of what will be we think the House settlement.

That's a good place for us to be. The more money we can generate, obviously the more money that goes back to the schools. It's not the ACC's dollars, it's really the schools'

dollars.

I'm confident in our schools. I'm confident in our direction and plans about creativity and innovation helping us to close that gap.

Q. You mentioned you've now been here a year. The size and scope of your staff, has that changed much? One of the reasons you came here was to expand your corporate base. Is that working? Lastly, with the approved renovations of Spectrum Center and Bank of America Stadium, how does that affect your revenue and presentation of championship events?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: I'll take it one at a time. Had to take some notes because it's getting lengthy there (smiling).

Staff is about the same. We're under 50 full-time staff members. I said it before. They're exceptional. It's like your world. I mean, the time that each of you have to put in to do your job, it's insatiable. If you can give it 12 hours. If you give it 14 hours, it will take 14. That's what the staff is.

It's less than 50 trying to provide the greatest experience we can for now 12,200 student-athletes. I think the world of them. I wouldn't want another team, a better group of individuals. So that's the group.

Second piece, corporate sponsorship has never been better. I think this last year we did more than my first two and a half years, almost three years, just locally here. The presence has been great. The media piece of it's been great. The international airport.

Maybe connection to your first part, the recruitment and retention of talent has been eye-opening about people wanting to move to Charlotte, et cetera.

I will say this, though, I loved our team in Greensboro. I will always cherish that time. I really enjoyed my two and a half years there. That is a great community. I think everybody knows how difficult that was for the ACC to move to Charlotte.

Spectrum Center, I'm very excited about the renovations. Have had a chance to meet with the new owners at a game during the year, a Hornets game.

Obviously we're going to have the men's basketball tournament there this year. It's the first time I think since 2019. We have -- someone told me the most recent figure is about 105,000 living alums in the Charlotte area.

I'm excited about just putting that tournament that has such great history in this great state in Charlotte, being able to walk. Maybe some of you are experiencing these during our kickoff this week, where you can get to a hotel and not need anything. Walk to a restaurant, walk over to the Spectrum Center. You can go to some museums and the rest of it. I'm excited about that.

We'll continue to look for ways to use the Spectrum Center. We'll be there with women's basketball shortly after, which I'm really excited about that.

Having football here, having baseball here, we're playing lacrosse here, it's really a nice focal point as we not only have our championships in the Charlotte area, but we'll distribute them around. We want to continue to get into different markets and all of that. But this is a good place for the ACC to call home.

Q. You were asked about alternate ways to generate money. Specifically with private equity, what concerns would you have with schools pursuing an investment on that front?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Nothing's for free. That's probably the most important piece of this thing. Yes, influx of cash allows you to do some things, but do schools want to do that individually, collectively? Do they not want to do it at all?

Again, I think it's just the times that we're in that you're looking at lots of different options, trying to make sure you're vetting them at the right level to make really good, educated decisions.

Q. I wanted to ask, you had some strong words for Clemson and Florida State today. What is your working relationship with them right now? Has that been a distraction at all in your business activities with those two universities?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: I think very highly of Rick McCullough, Jim Clements. I'd say we're friends. I think very highly of Michael Alford, Graham Neff. It hasn't changed my working relationship with them at all - at all - because of how I've tried to address it and how I've asked the staff to address it.

And that is, the legal piece will be the legal piece.

We will do what we have to do just like they are going did to do what they have to do.

The moment that first lawsuit happened in December, I grabbed the staff and I told them that we are not going to

treat any school any differently because student-athletes have nothing to do with this, coaches have nothing to do with this, a lot of administrators don't. This is just a separate piece.

We owe these young men and women at those two schools the very best experience possible. This thing doesn't have to be evil. This thing doesn't have to be about hatred, all the other things that I think we all see kind of free flowing in our society.

It's important and we've taken our stance. We'll stay on that stance, but we'll do it in a very respectful way.

Q. You said earlier that the 12-team College Football Playoff format is good for the ACC. Do you feel of the same about a 14-team playoff and perhaps uneven AQs?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: I just want to say this. Josh is a really big Baltimore Orioles fan. He was like crushing me with a text about he's going to see the Cubs play, the Chicago Cubs play at Camden Yards in Baltimore.

Cubs aren't having a great season. The Orioles are certainly are having a great season. Then I haven't heard from him till this morning (laughter). Like, I thought he was in the witness protection program.

Not that everyone would know, but the Cubs went to Baltimore and swept all three games. It wasn't even close (smiling). So good to see you, Josh.

Do I need to answer that question (smiling)?

All right. Listen, there's a lot of things that have been talked about and will be talked about about the CFP. I use the word 'hammered'. We hammered it out. That's what occurred.

But at the end of the day it's a good thing for college football, it's a good thing for those that play college football at the FBS level, and we're at a 12-team event.

I think it's been intentional that we have not looked beyond these next two years until we have a chance to see how the 12-team format plays itself out.

I think it's really good as it relates to just more opportunities for student-athletes to play. My biggest issues were protection of the ACC and conference champions, and the health and safety and welfare of student-athletes if this ends up being a long season.

We'll address whether we stay at 12 or go beyond. So it's



really speculation right now because, honestly, since we have met and declared it was a 12-team playoff, we've had no discussions about what a potential new format would look like.

Q. Coach K recently told me when it comes to realignment he sees one of the biggest factors as 'FOX being at war with ESPN'. You just described ESPN and your relationship with them as having never been stronger. It would seem it would help the ACC if somebody at ESPN would come out and say, This is our partner through 2036, as that original contract was written, rather than discussions about a February deadline and opt out option. What can you tell us about how ESPN is advocating for you, given your description that the relationship has never been better?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Where did you see Coach K?

Q. He was on my show.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Okay, all right. We both went to the same high school, different generations, though (smiling).

We have a great relationship. I'm not just saying that. We have a great relationship with ESPN and the ACC Network, all of rest of that. We've had significant positive discussions and progress on one component of the contract.

Our partnership with ESPN is not going away. It's not going away. We have talked to them about additional resources and how do we monetize it.

We're 50/50 partners on that. They're as motivated as we are to generate more revenue for the overall television deal. I'm very optimistic about where we're going with them. They understand the importance.

I'll just leave it at that.

Q. With the time zones now spanning coast to coast, what are the challenges scheduling particularly in a multitude of sports where travel is going out to Cal and Stanford? How have ESPN been helping in trying to create the best game slots for programs?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Yeah, so being in multiple time zones is really good from a programming standpoint. We're excited about what that looks like. We've had conversations with them. Our internal people have done a really good job with some of the folks up in Bristol.

I think one of the components we have to look at is what is it doing from a student-athlete standpoint. Honestly, we spent a lot of time on that, we really did.

It's unfortunate because when you go through expansion, you're not able to engage with necessarily student-athletes because it's at such a high level; it's at the board level. You can't get all kinds of opinions about it, right, all the rest of it.

But we were very clear with the three new schools about what would be the reaction, what would be the feeling. They're going to be coming to the East Coast more often than our student-athletes are going to have to go to the West Coast.

They were very enthusiastic about it, et cetera.

Depending on what sport it is, it will vary about the number of trips going east to west or west to east. But it's almost unlimited when you think about not only do you have a great partner in ESPN, but you have your own network, one of only three, where you can do it for a variety of sports, different time zones, kickoff, first pitch, start of a soccer match, whatever sport you want to use as an example.

I don't know that we have it all figured out, only that you're going to see us from 12:00 in the morning for football, since we're here at Football Kickoff, 12:00 noon all the way up to that late game on Saturday night.

But having some parameters about when you travel in one direction or another, maybe not having another trip out there for another year for the current teams, then maybe having that off week come after that.

Sometimes when it's Cal, Stanford, SMU coming towards the east. Again, feel good about where that's at. Feel like we can really, really have some great platforms on ACC Network, on ESPN-2, ABC, et cetera.

Q. Last year at this time you mentioned the exposure the league was getting with the prime time Saturday games, noon kickoffs. The SEC has taken a lot of those kickoff times. Have you talked to ESPN about making sure that the ACC, those Saturdays around ACC triple-header? Roster size, will the entire ACC have to adapt those roster sizes, scholarships, or will you allow that decision to be made by campuses?

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Let me go in kind of the reverse order.

Roster sizes, what I'll say is we've had too many -- not too many. We've had an awful lot of conversations with our schools, with our ADs, SWAs, coaches, the rest of it.

If the settlement goes through, this is not a reduction of scholarship opportunities. This is scholarships in addition to what we're currently giving. This is going to be good for our sports as it relates to equivalency sports.

Right now baseball is at 11.9. You can't have a baseball team with that. It will go up exponentially. I feel like we're in a good place there. I can't really say much more.

We've met as commissioners probably once a week for the last six weeks on it. But getting information so that collectively we can get to a number that feels right. It's a little bit like the teeter totter principle. If you push on one sport, the male side, it drops the women on the other. You're trying to make sure, again, there's equity, Title IX is met and some of those kind of things.

But feel really good about the progress we're making.

Your first part of the question. We have talked about time, situating the ACC in really good spots both on ABC and the ESPN channels, as well as our own network. I feel good about it as we look into the season. I feel good about what I've seen in the month of September where we're going to be.

But they understand fully. I also know our teams are going to play well. When you play well, you get rewarded.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. That concludes today's commissioner's forum.

COMMISSIONER PHILLIPS: Thank you.

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