

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Thursday July 13, 2017

John Swofford

Press Conference

JOHN SWOFFORD: Thank you, and thanks to all of you for being here for our 46th Annual ACC Football Kickoff. It's great to see such an excellent crowd after such an excellent year by our universities and our teams.

I want to start by introducing several important people that are new to our league since this event last year. Some are here, some are not, but I wanted to mention them. We have four new athletic directors since a year ago, which is a bit unusual in our league, but they're outstanding additions to the Atlantic Coast Conference. John Wildhack at Syracuse, who's a Syracuse grad, by the way. Todd Stansbury at Georgia Tech, and Todd played football at Georgia Tech on some very successful teams, and now is back at his alma mater as the AD. And our two most recent AD hires, both of which will be here with us today. I'm not sure they are in the room, but for those of you who might not know them, I did want to introduce them, Heather Lyke at the University of Pittsburgh, and Martin Jarmond of Boston College. But those are four just superb athletic directors that have joined our league in the last year.

I also want to welcome Kevin Best as senior associate commissioner for communications. I know many of you know Kevin from his involvement over the years in the league, and I know he'll do an outstanding job for us.

You know, our league has consistently had personnel that have served in leadership capacities in the NCAA governance structure, and I wanted to just remind you because, as background information, you may need to talk to these people as things evolve at the NCAA level. Blake James, the athletic director at Miami, has been elected chair of the Division I council. We're very pleased to have him in that role. And President Bud Peterson of Georgia Tech has been elected chair of the NCAA Board of Governors. Two very important roles in the NCAA governance structure, and our league is very proud of them for their positioning there, and certainly hopeful that they will both enjoy that experience and be tremendous representatives for this league and for college athletics.

Also, just as a reminder, President John Thrasher of Florida State University, continues as our College Football Playoff Presidents Board representative. It's



been excellent working with John in that capacity, and as you well know, Dan Radakovich, the athletic director at Clemson, is going into another year on the College Football Playoff Selection Committee. And that committee has certainly done an excellent job, and Dan has made superb contributions to that group.

Bill Hancock is with us, and Bill, I don't know if you're in the room or not, but if he's not, you will see him periodically during the day. I know he'd be happy to speak with you, and Bill has just been outstanding as the executive director of the College Football Playoff.

You know, this is an exciting time for the Atlantic Coast Conference. You know that. I know that. We're enjoying unprecedented success, both academically and athletically, and as we look to the future, we're extremely well-positioned with countless opportunities in front of us.

We also know that you don't live too long on last year's laurels, where we've had not only a terrific year this past year but for a number of years. For a number of years, as well, we have talked about the ACC Network, where we were going with television. We continue to move ahead with significant excitement and a lot of optimism as we count down to the launch of the ACC Network with ESPN. Since our announcement last year, at this time at this event, our attention has understandably, I think, been focused on the preparations of the linear network. And while that has been going on, if you recall, we launched at this time last year the expected rollout, which actually occurred last September, of the ACC Network Extra, which is our live event digital platform.

A lot of people made that extremely successful this year. We're grateful to those many individuals, both on our campuses and with our partners at ESPN, who helped produce and distribute over 1,450 events last year. That far exceeded our goal of 600 events, so a tremendous first year in that way.

As for the linear network, there's a lot of activity currently underway, and that activity is on our 15 campuses. It's at our offices in Greensboro. It's at ESPN campuses in Bristol, as well as here in Charlotte, as we prepare for the launch in just 24 months.

Preparing to produce and distribute over 1,500 events between the linear and digital networks requires a lot of planning and preparation and obviously some lead time to do it right and launch it in the way we want to launch it. ACC and ESPN teams are diligently working to complete the multiple tasks that are required for the launch, and we're extremely pleased with the progress. And not only pleased with the progress, we're, as a part of that, right on schedule. And in several instances, slightly ahead of schedule in the various phases of the network operations and buildout.

There have been several things written and speculated about the network in recent weeks. I'm sure some of you may have questions related to the network, but I trust you will understand that we're at a stage in our timetable and process with ESPN where it's simply not going to be prudent for us to discuss until we reach the launch, the specific business aspects that are a work in progress.

In the meantime, we will, again, have superb coverage of ACC football this fall through ABC and ESPN, the ACC syndicated network through Raycom Sports, and the FOX regional networks, as well as ACC Network Extra for digital live events, and the ACCDN for supplemental coverage of all things ACC. So the coverage of Atlantic Coast Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference football, is outstanding and only stands to get even more outstanding as we move forward.

Now, as you might expect, I'd like to take a minute to look back at the excellent success our schools and programs had last year. When you look at the collective accomplishments illustrated behind me: From the announcement of our extended grant of rights and upcoming ESPN extension and ACC channel; to our league, our student-athletes, leading our peer conferences academically by almost any measure, as our programs have consistently done and as I think you know is very important in this league historically and traditionally; to winning team national championships, including for only the 10th time in NCAA history and the third time in ACC history, capturing both the football and men's basketball titles in the same year; to individual performances that garnered both national championships and numerous national accolades for our players and our coaches.

With all of that said, I think it's pretty obvious the past year certainly was one of the league's most successful years and possibly the most successful year that our league has ever had.

Specifically related to football, this event provides the opportunity to celebrate the collective efforts of our teams, and one thing I've learned in college athletics

over the years is that when you have the opportunity to celebrate those kinds of successes, you should do it. We're coming off a year that included Clemson's College Football Playoff National Championship; 11 bowl teams, all that finished with winning records, which led all conferences; Lamar Jackson's Heisman Trophy, and Deshaun Watson finishing second in that voting; nine postseason wins, including another Orange Bowl trophy, setting a league record and tying the national record ever for any conference, and the nation's best record against both non-conference and other Power Five conference opponents.

But it's really not about one year. It's not just about last year or even the last couple of years. Our conference schools, programs, coaches, and players have built a strong foundation for the future. Two of the last four national championships, two of the last four Heisman trophies, five consecutive Orange Bowl championships, winning eight games in the BCS New Year's Six and College Football Playoff since 2012; the achievements in football and accomplishments across all sports, coupled with the continued academic success and the future of the ACC Network has literally been years in the making. The strategic vision by the leadership at our schools, whether on our individual campuses or collectively at the league level, combined with our dedicated business partners, is what has us so well-positioned now as well as for the long- and short-term future.

Now, as I said, you can't live in the past in college athletics. You move on to the next year. And that's why you're here today as we start looking forward to the 2017 football season and ACC year.

Looking ahead to this season, our teams are once again playing arguably the toughest non-conference schedules of any league. That's something we started talking more and more about five, six, seven years ago, that we had to step up to the plate, improve our own league, play our share of tough outside competition, and win our share of those games. Our programs have done that. They've done all of those three things over the last half dozen years.

The first week of the season this year will feature ACC teams in many of the top games, including neutral site games here in Charlotte, in Washington, D.C., and culminating with our annual Labor Day Monday night game as a part of the two Chick-fil-A kickoff games at Atlanta's brand new Mercedes-Benz Stadium.

In addition to the non-conference slate, we continue to highlight our teams with attractive and challenging conference match-ups throughout the fall. The conference schedule is not only rigorous -- and in my opinion I think it's the most rigorous it has ever been in

this league's history. I think we're deeper than we've ever been. I think we've got more good teams than we've ever had. I think it's tougher to win the Atlantic Coast Conference in football than it has ever been.

So the conference schedule is not only rigorous, but it also is filled with what we think are compelling rivalries based on the quality of our programs. I just left a coaches' meeting with the Atlantic Division coaches just before this meeting, and we had some great conversations, and I was telling the story of going back a few years when we were leaving the BCS behind and moving to the College Football Playoff. In talking to our coaches at Amelia Island at our spring meeting about the importance of us stepping up program-wise and talking with our athletic directors about the importance of that, that we had to make a better showing going forward, to have our place in the playoff, because you know and I know that in some years of the BCS we didn't perform very well in those BCS games, and it was there for the world to see.

They stepped up, and by they, I'm talking about everybody in our league. I told them the story about Dabo Swinney in that particular meeting, and Dabo said, "Listen, we've got to do what the Commissioner is talking about, and any of you that don't think this league is going to be a prominent part of the playoff, you need to take a look in the mirror. We need to take a look in the mirror." Because if you play the right people and you develop your program enough to win enough of the right games, there's no reason we shouldn't be in the playoff every year.

And I thank Dabo, for following up as he did with his comments at that particular meeting, because it obviously resonated, and certainly it resonated at Clemson with Clemson's National Championship this year.

But my point is, league-wise, I think this league, strategically, in positioning itself and on our campuses, with our coaching hires, our recruiting, our willingness to play tough games, and now our ability to win enough of those tough games -- you're not going to win all of them, that's why we are where we are today.

And when I talk about the conference schedule -- and we like to talk about who we play outside the league, and that's very important and that has helped us -- when you look at Clemson's run to the National Championship this year, obviously the win over Alabama was as exciting and went to the last second and was as tough as it gets. But getting to that game, Clemson's two toughest games were against conference opponents at home, NC State and Pitt. And Pitt won that game. And State could have won that game. And Clemson was the best team in

America, proven at the end.

If that doesn't tell you something about where ACC football is today, I'll give you my glasses, because we've made some progress. But I'm proud of our schools. I'm proud of our ADs and their hires. I'm proud of the commitment they've made to the sport.

The regular season will culminate with the 13th Annual Dr. Pepper ACC Football Championship Game back in Charlotte at Bank of America Stadium, where they have given us such a great home. But I also want to thank and recognize our partners in Orlando last year for their tireless work and hospitality and hosting the game and the excellent job they did with that on relatively short notice.

But as I've said before, we're thrilled to return to Charlotte. This will be our seventh time with our football championship game here in Charlotte -- Saturday, December 2nd, primetime in Bank of America Stadium.

We've touched on our bowl success previously, but I want to, again, call attention to our appealing postseason bowl lineup. We're in the fourth year of our six-year agreements and continue to feel that these are win-win partnerships that give us excellent competitive opportunities when bowl season rolls around.

We've enhanced our sites. We've enhanced our dollars. We've enhanced who we play and the quality of who we play in our bowl games -- another real plus, I think, for ACC football.

Before I open it up for questions, I want to touch on just a few timely topics related to the current landscape of college athletics. We're going into our fourth year of autonomy. We've seen significant enhancements, I think, surrounding our student-athlete experience through the implementation of full cost of attendance, a required concussion protocol review process, the recently-adopted time balance reforms, all of which -- and I think this is important to note -- were enhanced by the increasing student-athlete voice, both in conference and NCAA decisions. That has worked out extremely well during the first three years, where our student-athletes are actually in the room, in most cases actually have votes as to legislation going forward that affects them directly.

Their independent thinking has really contributed to that process and made it better. The work by the autonomy conferences is certainly ongoing. I think we're getting better and better at working with each other as an autonomy group, and what I mean by that is that, basically, we set up four years ago a new structure that to be effected required the five autonomy

conferences to really sit down at the table and work together. It's kind of like in a conference -- you know, one of the things you have in a conference, you've got in our case 14 schools in football, 15 in all other sports, that compete with each other, recruiting, on the field, on the court, in every way possible, and then you ask them to come in and sit around a conference table and do what's right for the collective best, to do what's right for the conference as a whole. That's what we're now doing around this particular conference table of autonomy with the five major conferences.

So that's the first time we've really done that in terms of legislation, in terms of the NCAA governmental structure, governance structure. So we've had to learn to do that, quite honestly. But I think we've learned quickly, and I think that's gone extraordinarily well.

I think our progress so far on behalf of particularly the student-athletes has been appropriate. I think it's been necessary, and I think it's been meaningful, because what's been done has been substantive.

More globally, the NCAA transfer working group is in the midst of its efforts, gathering feedback through July and August in preparation for potential legislation that would be proposed this fall and voted on in January, so that may be something you'll want to keep an eye on. I don't know where that is headed at this point in time. Jane Miller from the University of Virginia is on that particular committee, and we will be getting direct feedback from her as that process moves forward.

But it's an important topic, as you well know, that requires, I think, a lot of thoughtful conversation and hopefully will end with thoughtful recommendations to find the right balance for our athletes as well as for our programs and universities. What that right balance might be, I don't know, but I think it's an issue that needs to be looked at and will be looked at both from a graduate-transfer and undergraduate-transfer point of view.

Moving more specifically into football, this spring the NCAA Division I Council's decision on football reforms was announced. Although not perfect for everyone in every instance, it is significant, positive progress for the sport and its student-athletes, and I think the new NCAA Football Oversight Committee and that approach along with working with the Division I Council gives us a way to probably more effectively address these issues as a whole rather than one-off kinds of issues that don't necessarily connect with the whole picture of what makes something better for college football.

The Division I Football Oversight Committee will now turn its focus to examining a permanent 14-week

football playing season. In my conversations with our coaches, I think it's safe to say they're supportive of an additional bye week that would come from that, but they are -- but they don't want to do that at the expense of bringing players in even earlier in the end of July when second session summer school is still going on.

So I don't know where we will end up on that. On the one hand, there are things they really like from it, things that we really like from it. On the other hand, I'm not sure how our players would feel about that. I'm not sure how that -- if it moves back into July, how that would sit with what we've tried to do in autonomy in giving the players more time to themselves. But again, important potential legislation ahead in that regard.

With the game itself, we had strong momentum with our experimental efforts and collaborative instant replay last year and will continue to further refine it in the coming season. Beyond collaborative replay, there are a number of rule changes and points of emphasis including the focus on coaches' sideline behavior as well as speeding up the flow of the game, and I would encourage you to attend Dennis Hennigan's officiating forum, and Dennis is here this morning, but he'll be in here at 4:30, I think, this afternoon to talk about those particular items in more detail. And Dennis is doing just a tremendous job in leading our officiating program.

I also would like to recognize an individual that's coming off the field this year, and he's going to take on a new role as a special advisor in the ACC to our officiating program. Ron Cherry has served college football officiating extremely well for 25 years, and we will miss his outstanding work on the field. With that said, he will now specifically assist Dennis in the areas of recruitment with an emphasis in cultivating minorities and in our overall training program.

I thought Ron Cherry had one of the greatest -- not one of -- the greatest lines in the history of college football officiating on the microphone a few years ago, and some of you will remember. We had a game, a conference game, and Ron was doing the game, and a flag was thrown, and the officials conferred briefly. Ron gets on the mic and says, "Penalty against so-and-so, No. so-and-so, for giving No. so-and-so the business." I thought that was one of the great lines ever, and Ron might have been one of the few officials who could actually have sort of gotten away with that.

But we came into the office Sunday, and somebody on my staff said, do we need to consider reprimanding Ron? I said, well, what are you going to reprimand him for? Well, he didn't follow protocol in terms of what he was supposed to say. I said, we're not reprimanding Ron. Everybody in America knew exactly what he

meant. That was the greatest description of a penalty call that I've ever heard in the history of the game.

So it's good -- we've all been lucky to have Ron on the field for that period of time, and we're fortunate in our league to have his willingness to work with us and continue to work with us in the capacity in which he will go forward.

So let me stop at that and entertain any questions that you may have. Once again, we're very happy to have you with us.

Q. With the network, the things you referred to, the network under way and the upward climb of football, what do you see as the next big goal or philosophical move for the ACC in the next long-term? What are the next big goals for the conference?

JOHN SWOFFORD: You know, I think right now with the transitions that we've made in terms of membership, in terms of where we're headed with television, what I would say at this point in time is, one, when you grow and you've got a fairly significant amount of change going on in your organization, in this case in our conference, you need to make sure that you're not veering away from what your mission is and who you are, what your value system is. We've paid a lot of attention to that. That's one of the things we've prided ourselves on over the years, has been the ability to trust one another in the league. And reverting back to what I said earlier about getting into -- sitting around a table and making decisions that are in the best interest of the league, the way you do that is develop a culture of trust, and so I think we need to continue developing that. I think it's been absolutely tremendous considering the growth from nine to 12 to 15. But I think the first thing you do is take a bit of a deep breath from all the change and make sure that you continue to be who you say you are and who you want to be.

Secondly, I think it's a case of making -- in terms of the near future, making things work in simple terms, and by that I mean scheduling, I mean divisions. I mean, certainly the -- our path forward with television and the ACC channel, with ESPN. That's huge, without question. And developing new rivalries, which I think we are doing in the league. Those take time. You just don't decide so-and-so and so-and-so is going to be a rival and it happens. It has to happen over time and because of games and situations and so on and so forth.

And I think, you know, beyond that -- which is basically taking a deep breath and making certain that what's new to us is working really well and is of the quality that

we want and the channel is successful as we work with ESPN, I think beyond that, we've got to start really paying attention, and I think we are already. But with the changing technology that's out there and what that means to our league and to college athletics and to our institutions, I think we have to really factor in life as it exists today and evaluate the past and how we've done things in the past, and does it fit for the future. If it was successful in the past, does it mean it necessarily is going to be successful for the future, and with that comes things like technology and adjusting to whatever technology is there.

I think the world today moves a lot more quickly. I think younger people don't necessarily -- I don't mean this negatively -- don't necessarily have the same pace or attention span to whatever they want to do with their lives. What does that mean to college athletics? What does that mean to putting people in the stadiums and arenas? What does that mean to developing donors at the institutional level as we move forward? Are there generational changes there? We need the analytics there. We need to understand it in order to develop the right approach and a positive approach and successful approach to dealing with it.

The great thing about where we are is the fact that with our grant of rights, with the television channel, with the commitment that our schools have made to each other, through those avenues, our schools are bonded in this league, in essence, through 2035-36, and we're bonded with our television partner through that same period of time.

So it's a great opportunity for us to work through whatever we're going to need to work through, knowing that we're together.

Q. As you said, Commissioner, the league does return the Heisman Trophy winner, and there are several other talented quarterbacks returning, but a majority of schools must replace their quarterbacks. You, of course, have played the quarterback position in this league. What's your assessment of the quarterback turnover on the league's fortunes this year?

JOHN SWOFFORD: Well, obviously we've lost some really good quarterbacks from a year ago. There's no question about that. We've got some coming back that are very good players and may be even better players this year as they develop and evolve that started last year. We've got some starting quarterbacks in the league that may well have transferred from other programs and will start immediately. We've got several of those possibilities.

I'm just confident -- you know, you'd like to have every

one of those quarterbacks back, which would be really selfish of us as a league. I'm pleased they had the careers they had, the success they had, and I'm pleased that they played in this league and now they have the opportunity to move on to the NFL and realize their dreams there.

But I think the fact that that number of quality quarterbacks were in the league is a credit to our coaches and who they have recruited and who they appear to continue to be recruiting. One thing, and all of you see this, you know, there's going to be somebody in the wings that steps in and becomes the next Deshaun Watson. There aren't many Deshaun Watsons, but you get my gist. There are more good ones coming. And I'm confident that our schools are doing a good enough job recruiting now that you'll be watching other great quarterbacks that may emerge from recruiting, may emerge from quarterbacks that were very good players last year that got excellent experience and maybe go to the next level this year.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about divisional realignment, better balance. That's all cyclical, but real concerns for schools. For instance, NC State and Duke play each other once every six years. It's hard to build a rivalry when you're only playing so infrequently. What's the best way for the league to address those matters?

JOHN SWOFFORD: I don't know. I don't have an answer to that really. I think that's probably one of the -- one of those challenges that any league that gets to 14 has. I mean, there's no easy solution to that. And what's right for one conference might not be right for another conference. But it's pretty much -- it's very similar in every league of our size. I think that's one of the -- you know, in an ideal world you'd love for everybody to play everybody.

The next thing you love is for everybody to play everybody as often as they can, since it can't be every year. And then beyond that, you just keep, I think, turning over, is there a better way to do this? If you ever get to the point where you just say, you know, there's not a better way to do it, that's not a good place to be. I don't care how well things are going, you need to be looking at is there a better way to do it?

So far we haven't come up with one that's better than what we're doing in the minds of the majority of our schools, and that's how that works is a majority vote.

Same thing with divisions. We haven't really talked about divisions in several years now. There for a while, we talked about it and how to schedule every meeting.

So I think right now where we are, things have settled

in both in terms of how we schedule and in terms of the divisions, and you know, divisions can change. We all know that. Right now -- and if you look at -- surprisingly, to some, if you look at over the years the head-to-head competition with the Atlantic and Coastal, it's very close to .500. It's not imbalanced.

But you know, we'll keep looking at it, but I wouldn't anticipate any change in the near future.

Q. You mentioned some of the highlights of the past school year. Obviously the league had some black eyes during that same time, whether it was the Louisville basketball scandal and what they were willing to do to get recruits or the ongoing North Carolina academic saga or WikiLeaks showed what people in this league are willing to stoop to to try to win a football game. How do you deal with the challenges as a commissioner of trying to maintain the pursuit of athletic success but without it coming at a cost to the league's reputation?

JOHN SWOFFORD: Well, I think you do several things. The first thing you do is consistently and constantly talk about the importance of the balance of academics, athletics and integrity. Those are the foundation blocks of this league. They have been for many, many years. That hasn't changed, and when any of us fall short in regard to that, then it's a disappointment, without question.

The other thing we do is once these things come to some type of culmination, the school that has had the problem comes before the other 14 schools and, in essence, gives a session on what happened and what they're doing to correct it, and that's really based on learning something from it and other schools learning how to avoid it. Most of the time, without getting into particular sessions, it's not an entire institution. It gets perceived, I guess, as an entire institution, when most of the time it's a few people that made some bad decisions.

So those are the things I think you do as a conference. As I've said before, you know, I like to -- I don't want any of those things on our plate. That's -- and historically, we haven't had many in this league, relatively speaking and historically. But we've had some, from the very beginning, because it's -- intercollegiate athletics is a passionate world. It's a world that plays out very publicly. It's a world with more and more pressure to win, and there are human beings that are in all of these roles, and unfortunately us human beings made mistakes sometimes. Sometimes they're little ones; sometimes they're big ones. It would be nice not to have any of those.

I like to get them over with as quickly as possible, but in my role, we really don't have much impact on that. But I always feel like the better approach is to find out what happened, address it, correct it, and as quickly as you can through the process, put it behind you and move on. Sometimes that's hard to do in today's processes, but the best day for any league is when you don't have any of that. So hopefully those will be put to rest and no others coming forward in the near future.

Q. Commissioner, more and more the opinion is Notre Dame is hurting itself in the College Football Playoff by not being involved in a Conference Championship game. Is that something the ACC sells, or are you just letting them come to their own conclusion?

JOHN SWOFFORD: I didn't quite actually understand the first part of what you said if you don't mind repeating it.

Q. More and more the opinion in college football is that Notre Dame hurts its College Football Playoff chances by not being involved in a Conference Championship game.

JOHN SWOFFORD: When Notre Dame came into the ACC, it was fully understood that they were coming on the agreement that we came to, the five games on average against ACC schools each year in football in full membership and all the other sports.

From a conference perspective -- and I think Notre Dame would say the same thing, and they have said the same thing to me -- this has met every expectation that we had as a conference. I think it's met every expectation that Notre Dame has had. I think it's been positive for Notre Dame. I think it's been positive for the ACC. That's what we thought it would be. That's what it is.

There wasn't an expectation that at some point in time Notre Dame would ask for full membership in football. That is not a point of discussion at this given point in time. Obviously, if Notre Dame reached the point where they wanted to have that discussion, we would readily sit down and speak with them about that.

I think the fact that in our agreement with Notre Dame, the league's contractual agreement with Notre Dame, and through the grant of rights -- which Notre Dame as one of our 15 members signed and that is held in the conference office along with the other 14 -- as a part of that contractual agreement, if Notre Dame joins a conference between now and 2035-36 in football, it will be the Atlantic Coast Conference. I don't anticipate that happening tomorrow while you're still here.

It's working extremely well. As I said, if we reach a

point where that's to be discussed, then we would be ready to discuss that. Notre Dame knows that. You know, we have -- we're very close to Notre Dame. We treat them as a full member. I think they feel like a full member by and large. But the one difference is football and football postseason, particularly from a playoff standpoint.

That's about all I can tell you on that. Maybe more than you wanted to hear.

Q. John, despite the repeal of HB2 and the enactment of HB142, many in the LGBTQ community is still unhappy with how far the bill went or how far maybe it didn't go; for instance, private businesses still can -- aren't required to enforce some of these laws, cities can't enforce non-discrimination policies until 2020. What about the bill made you feel comfortable bringing back championship games to the state despite a lot of those objections?

JOHN SWOFFORD: It took us basically back to where the state was before HB2 went into effect, and that's when our league had made decisions, as had the NCAA, to award championship events to the state of North Carolina.

Q. You talked a little bit about some of the technical changes, the technology changes that impact how you guys view the future of the network. I'm curious how you view the future of actually getting fans into the stands and how changes in how people are consuming sports might impact that.

JOHN SWOFFORD: Well, I don't have a silver bullet for that answer, but I think we do, as I said earlier, have to continue to really look at that, and particularly look at it in terms of what appeals to the younger generations, because they are the fans of the future, the long-term future as well as donors. I think probably one of the areas you start is with your own students on your campus. It's not so much a conference issue as it is an institutional issue. But one of the great aspects of having a conference and being a conference where there's some trust around the table is the ability to share best practices and what's worked and what hasn't worked from campus to campus, and our schools are doing a lot of that, which I think is important.

But it's something that we need to constantly address, and it's just not college athletics. It's the professional leagues, as well. It's high schools, the whole works. You know, to make the experience one that people enjoy and it's as easy as it can be and as affordable as it can be and hope that what they're seeing on the field or the court is really attractive. Obviously, the quality of what's out there makes a huge difference in reality, but

the overall experience does, too. And with the big screens and HD and so on and so forth, it's pretty good watching on television, too.