

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16, 1990

# Football provides spark, money fans movement flame

## Fans and super SEC shaping up as winners

For this you don't need a crystal ball: College sports — as we know it — is going through rapid, massive changes. You are going to be reading and hearing about conference expansion constantly.

Hours and hours of interviews have led to this: our best, as of Aug. 15, 1990, two-cents worth about how things eventually will shake down.

The facts, and the rumors, change daily. Remember, as you sort through it all, fondness for increased revenue is a two-touchdown favorite against tradition. And football is the sport in the driver's seat.

→ Listen, first to Ken Haines at Raycom, a TV syndicator that throws big bucks at conferences if it likes the headcount of TV households.

"This is the cutting edge," he says. "If the past is any indicator, what you're going to see within the next five years will form the fabric of college sports for the next 50 years."

So now you know how important all this realignment stuff is. And, if this is a sports story, you need some winners and losers.

Here's an up-to-the-moment linescore.

The winners:

► **Fans:** Because this movement is headed inevitably toward the two things college football fans want most: 1) fewer 55-3 games because the big guys will play each other more often. 2) a playoff for a national championship. No more of this mythical stuff.

► **Southeastern Conference:** The super SEC is a reality. Arkansas is in. Information has Florida State agreeing to a

### COLLEGE FOOTBALL

By JOHN BANNON

deal in private, though Florida State athletic director Bob Goin will be in Greensboro, N.C., Friday to discuss an Atlantic Coast Conference bid. Expect a late September announcement. South Carolina is panting to be invited. Despite Florida and Florida State's reluctance, Miami likely also will be extended an invitation.

► **Pac-10 Conference:** Geography makes this group immune to raiders. It has a good-sized percentage of the market, exclusively. And, it can pick off pretty much whomever it wants. Leaders in the clubhouse: Texas, Texas A&M, Colorado and Brigham Young. This will give the league 24.4% of the market.

The losers:

► **The SWC and maybe the Big Eight:** The SWC is clinging for its life and on the verge of losing its three marquee programs. The Big Eight needs to expand to survive with no natural way to go.

► **The just hanging around the bottom of big time football schools and eastern basketball conferences:** Division I-A is in for further squeezing to make the rich richer. Some of the above won't make the new cut. The Big East was the success story of the '80s. A good Temple team and a startling tournament run by a Cinderella Rhode Island team put the Atlantic 10 on the map. Both must circle the wagons to fight off raiders of its football properties.

► **Bowl games:** The best view of this is to pretend to be a chauvinist. The bowls and college football had a great marriage for nearly a century. But the husband has his head turned by the young blonde, throwing him TV dollars.

First, there will be a trial separation. The minor bowls play host to the superconferences' playoff games. Yes, put some substance to the Peach Bowl or the All American and the SEC keeping house.

Divorce, though, is the ultimate solution.

► **Pittsburgh and Oklahoma:** Pitt, because it has recruited a number of Proposition 48 athletes, is unattractive to some of the glamour groups. Oklahoma, with its athletes' off-the-field troubles, has similar image problems.

As warned, not all of this is set in stone. There are some key players left. Forget Texas and Texas A&M. Those two are packed and ready to back the moving van up.

Nebraska is, or should be, off to the financially more lucrative Big Ten. But the Huskers repelled that league's advances late last month. And maybe the Big Ten people will count heads in Lincoln, Neb., and realize that the Kansas City and St. Louis that Missouri has makes more sense.

But already the signs have started that Nebraska is rethinking about flirting with the Big Ten. Two school administrators said last week the Big Ten had a certain appeal.

This is the summer when every Division I-A administrator has gone back to school.

The course: "Our options."

VIA SATELLITE



# Sports

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## CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT:

## A NEW LOOK FOR THE '90S

### The changing face of college conferences

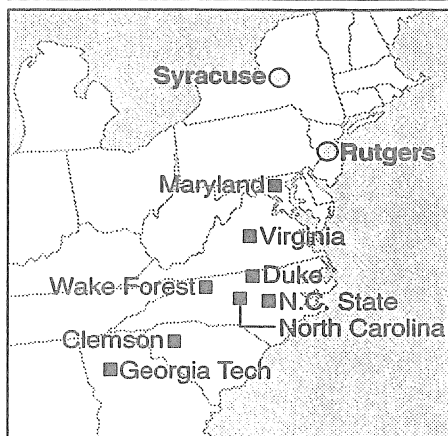
College conferences are realigning in an effort to create a greater television audience. USA TODAY looks at how college conferences could stack up in the near future.

Existing member ■

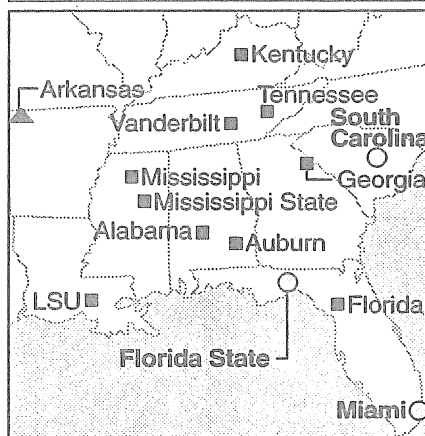
Projected member ○

New member ▲

#### ACC



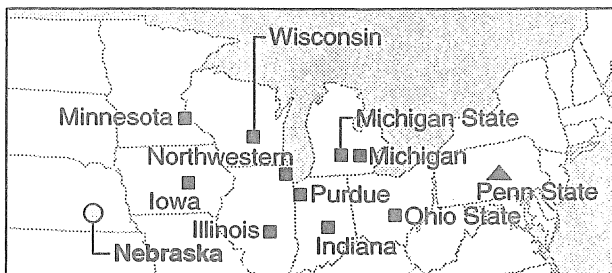
#### SEC



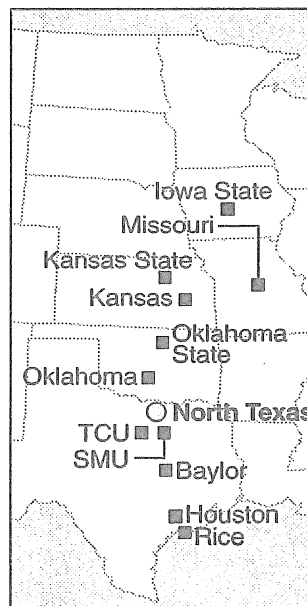
#### PAC 10



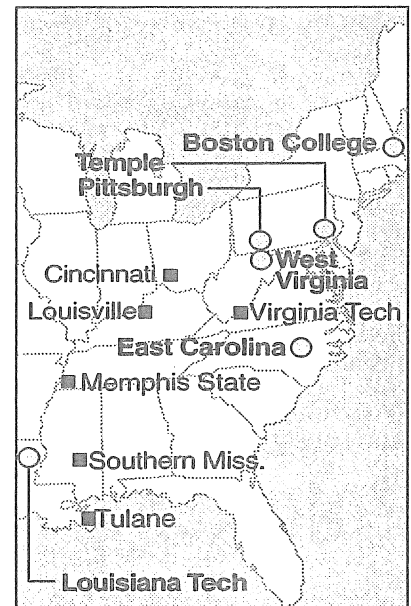
#### BIG TEN



#### BIG EIGHT/SWC



#### METRO



#### WAC

