

Football provides spark, money fans movement flame

Fans and super SEC shaping up as winners **The changing face of college conferences**

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.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

By JOHN BANNON

Metro considers doubling size

AP 6/15/90

ROANOKE (AP) — The eight-school Metro Conference, originally interested in expanding to 10 or 12 institutions, now is considering doubling its size, the Roanoke Times & World-News reported today.

The decision to broaden the Metro's growth possibilities to 16 schools was prompted by the Southeastern Conference's recent move toward expansion, said Ken Haines, executive vice president of Raycom Sports & Entertainment.

Haines, whose sports marketing firm is doing an expansion study for the Metro, said the conference's original intent was to add either two or four schools, but the SEC's plans prompted the Metro to consider other options.

"The Metro made an offensive move, and then the SEC made a defensive move that turned into an offensive move," Haines told the newspaper on Thursday. "What we're doing now is reacting to what's happened after all of this expansion and realignment talk by several leagues started to break loose."

The paper said the Metro's broadened options include possibly adding eight of the nine non-Metro teams canvassed for the conference by Raycom: Boston College, East Carolina, Miami (Fla.), Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Syracuse, Temple and West Virginia. Penn State, the other school in the study, recently was admitted to the Big Ten.

Syracuse athletic director Jake Crouthamel said the Metro's proposal has "gotten specific, but it includes a lot of people, some of which may not be available and some of which may be key players."

While saying Syracuse would be willing to talk with the Metro, Crouthamel said there are many unanswered questions regarding the Metro's 16-team presentation.

"Is Miami going to be in it?" he said. "How about Florida State, South Carolina? Pitt could go to the Big Ten. Rutgers could go to the Big Ten. I don't know who's going to go where."

Metro commissioner Ralph McFillen said he wants to have representatives of all schools involved in the league's plans meet in the near future.

"We need to move in due haste, to proceed as quickly as possible to get the interested parties together to look at this thing," McFillen said.

At the Metro's spring meeting last month in Destin, Fla., it was announced that Raycom had asked the conference to postpone any minor expansion to allow the company to compile additional information.

The SEC followed the Metro into the same Destin hotel and immediately announced its desire to pursue expansion.

Two Metro schools — Florida State and South Carolina — have been mentioned in connection with the SEC, which unlike the Metro crowns a champion in football as well as basketball. The SEC reportedly also has targeted Miami, an independent.

Florida State has agreed to be admitted to the SEC, if this conference decides to expand.

Raycom considers Louisville a key to the Metro's future because of its high-profile basketball program. The conference's other five schools — Cincinnati, Memphis State, Southern Mississippi, Tulane and Virginia Tech — find themselves waiting to see whether the more attractive schools will stay.

Haines said Raycom would be finished gathering information by the end of June and he said that he expected the Metro to meet soon to review the data.

Haines said the uncertainty is widespread. "There is a lot of pressure along with this and a lot of athletic directors are very nervous," he said. "The schools on the fence are scared they're going to be left out. The schools with the power are scared they're going to make the wrong choice."



Mitch Vingle

Vingle's Views

Dominion Post,
6-29-90

'Super-league' seems hard to resist, by-pass

I'VE LOOKED ALL over and I can't find it. I can't find it anywhere.

A reason, that is, for any one of the 16 schools that met Thursday in Charlotte, N.C., to balk at joining forces for what would prove to be the largest collegiate "super-conference" in the United States.

The 16-team proposal by the Metro Conference that includes West Virginia would play to a football television audience that would account for 35 percent of the country. Without Boston College, Syracuse, Pitt and East Carolina in basketball, the audience number would still be above 15.

Quite simply, it is the best proposal concerning Eastern teams to ever make it to print. The Big East schools retain their basketball gold mine. They strike one in football. The current Metro basketball schools add prestige via WVU and Temple along with Rutgers and Miami (Fla.).

And — all together now — WEST VIRGINIA ESCAPES THE ATLANTIC 10.

Of course, in football a conference with Miami, Florida State, WVU, Pitt, Syracuse, South Carolina, and, perhaps, Louisville, would be ultra-successful.

I put it to Ken Haines, vice president of Raycom, Inc., and the man who many said orchestrated the proposal. Why would any of the schools turn this down?

"I agree with you," he said. "I don't see why one would turn it down. I honestly don't."

Of course there will be grumblings. There always are. But this plan is a sure-fire winner.

The thought of negotiations with a major television network for rights to conference games is staggering. A contract for 35 percent of the population in football and a contract for 15 in basketball. (By the way, the 35 percent figure ignores Baltimore, Washington and Atlanta, all which are right in the path of the conference. Throw those in and the share moves to 40.)

In football, the NCAA allows a 12th game to be played for a conference championship when 12 teams are split into two divisions, which would happen under this plan. More money.

Want more? Consider how much a bowl would pay to have the Metro champion in its game. Consider how much a bowl would pay to have the runner-up. There has been talk that as many as three bowls would tie into this conference.

OK, OK, you may say, the glitch is that WVU gets to keep all the money it earns in bowl games. Now, revenue sharing would slice that to little pieces.

Wrong. Sources say the initial proposal for post-season revenue sharing had it that the school would keep 90 percent of the take. The rest of the conference would split the remaining 10 percent.

And here's a prediction: down the road, Pitt, Syracuse and Boston College will want in the basketball league. Once those schools realize they can push the Metro to the level of the Big East in basketball television dollars and be in an all-sports setup, the frame will be squared.

Right Ken?

"There's no question about that," said Haines. "But I think it will take some time to really study the ramifications of that move for those schools. I don't think they are ready at this point to bail out of the Big East, which has a good track record up to this point."

"Now, it may be that after an association with these other schools in football that that sort of scenario would be more attractive to them. Right now, I don't think the Big East schools are ready to make that move and that is why we made the suggestion we did."

Too good to be true? Maybe. Maybe not.

If you're looking for possible roadblocks, here they are: Florida State and South Carolina.

Florida State has a chance to be in the Southeastern Conference. South Carolina may have a shot at joining the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Those in South Carolina have been complaining for years that the Gamecocks should be in the ACC. If a slot opens, it may be tough for those in charge to turn it down. The athletic director would have to make a stand. The Metro would mean more money, but would public perception allow him to keep his job long enough to realize that money? Same deal with Florida State.

The bottom line is, however, both of those schools should jump at this proposal.

UPDATE

USA Today!
6-29-90

FROM USA TODAY'S NATIONAL NEWS NETWORK

Metro Conference seeks to expand to 16 teams

In the expansion wars, the Metro Conference has gone past the talking stage. After a two-day meeting in Charlotte, eight Eastern football independents have a concrete proposal to study.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRI. TRACK AND FIELD: BNP meeting, Lille, France.

SAT. BOWLING: PBA, Hammer Senior Open, Houston, through Thursday.

CYCLING: Tour de France, Prologue a Futuroscope (4 miles).

MOTORCYCLE RACING: Assen, Netherlands.

SUN. AUTO RACING: World 1 Sports Prototype endurance race, Hockenheim, West Germany; IMSA, Camel Continental, Watkins Glen, N.Y.

RUNNING: San Francisco Marathon.

MON. TRACK AND FIELD: Dagens-Nyheter Galan, Stockholm.

TUE. CYCLING: Tour de France, fourth stage, Nantes to Mount St. Michael.

SOCCER: World Cup, semifinal, Naples, Italy.

The eight — the University of Miami, East Carolina, West Virginia, Temple, Rutgers, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and Boston College — have been invited to join the Metro. It would become a 16-team league with two eight-team divisions for football.

The proposal is the outgrowth of a study the league had done by Raycom, a television syndicator, which already has a five-year deal to televise Metro basketball.

"This would be the first super-conference," said Ken Haines, a Raycom official. "In football, we'd be talking 35 percent of the country's TV markets. That's more than anybody — even the Big Ten. In basketball, even without the three Big East teams, you'd still be talking 15 percent, which puts it up with everybody except maybe the Big Ten and Big East."

Haines says Raycom

would like to see the deal firmed up in a month or two. It already has been approved by present Metro members.