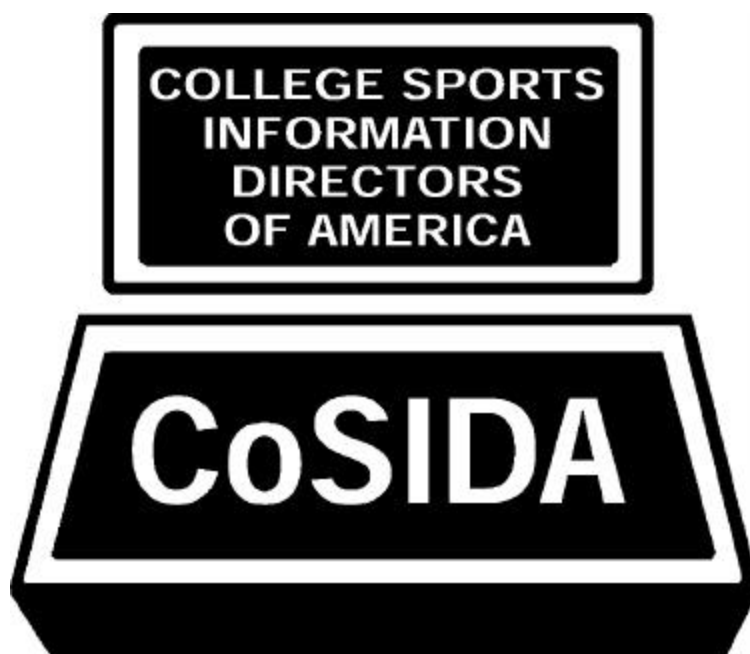


CoSIDA NEWS

Intercollegiate Athletics News from Around the Nation



June 7, 2007

APSE works with NFL on media policies

By JIM JENKS

APSE President

Executive Sports Editor, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Story posted on June 1, 2007

When the National Football League announced its new media policies last month, it included for the first time rules for the use of audio and video on Web sites.

Since May 14, when the policy was released, I have received more than 50 e-mails and phone calls from sports editors complaining that the NFL has gone too far this time and APSE needs to do something about it.

If it were not for APSE, there would be no policy at all and newspapers would not be permitted to use any audio and video from locker rooms and podium situations on their Web sites. The NFL, looking out for its own Internet and business interests, were prepared to allow newspapers nothing other than print stories, for which our credentials allowed.

Many newspapers, including my own, freely used audio and video on the Web over the past couple of years despite credential language that read, "Persons credentialed are not permitted to make commercial use of film or tape of events or venues without prior written approval of the NFL."

Who reads those credential conditions anyway? Well, the NFL did because they wrote it, and after a couple of informal discussions, they made clear that we should be reading them as well. It seems the media in some markets had been taking advantage of those teams that looked the other way. That wasn't the case in Washington with the Redskins and The Washington Post. Or in Miami with the Dolphins. These teams were looking to follow the letter of the NFL law and halt any use of audio and video from the paper sites.

After some separate examination of the policy with lawyers at The Inquirer, The Washington Post, Associated Press and Tribune Co., it was decided that working with the NFL and not fighting them through litigation should be the course of action.

In November, APSE first vice president Mike Fannin, legal affairs chair John Cherwa, Associated Press lawyer Dave Tomlin, Tribune Co. lawyer David Bralow and myself went to the NFL offices in New York to discuss the changing landscape of the newspaper business. The goal was to get the policy language changed so that newspapers could freely use audio and video acquired during daily reporting of stories, including podium feeds of players and coaches news conference.

The NFL was represented by Joe Browne, executive vice president of communications and public affairs and Greg Aiello, vice president of public relations, as well as two league lawyers specializing in media issues, Frank Hawkins and David Proper.

Summarizing a long meeting in a couple of short sentences, APSE asked for liberal use of audio and video in all situations. The NFL asked why. We discussed the changing face of our business and discussed examples of how newspapers would use the content.

It was a good session and by the end of it, I felt confident that something could be worked out. We agreed to get together again in March.

That didn't happen, but the NFL did discuss our needs at their owners meetings and Aiello continued to call me with questions, including, "What are the policies of the other major leagues?"

At the APSE Commissioners' Meetings in April, we reported back to the league that Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association and National Hockey League all had policies allowing unlimited use of audio and video on our sites.

That was the last we heard from the league before the policy was sent out three weeks later. The policy reads:

**SUMMARY OF RULES: ONLINE USE OF INTERVIEW / PRESS
CONFERENCE / PRACTICE VIDEO AND AUDIO**

- 45 seconds maximum per day (90 seconds maximum in two-team markets/45 seconds per team)
- Not live
- Available for online for only 24 hours maximum - no permanent archiving of video and audio
- Links back to NFL.com and team sites
- Only used in editorial context (no sponsorship or advertising around the content)
- No limitation on "talking head" video of reporters at NFL facilities that does not include interview/press conference content
- 45-second limit per day includes footage of team practice

Our immediate approach will be to try to meet with the NFL before the APSE convention to voice concerns about the policy, specifically the 45 seconds and archiving material, which seem to be the biggest points of contention.

At the convention, we will work on a formal response to the league.

I do again want to stress, however, that this was a step in the right direction. The NFL has recognized that we are a changing business and have decided to work with us. APSE and its member newspapers need not panic, but to look at it as a "first draft" and continue a productive dialogue to negotiate the needed change.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Information Technology

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i40/40a02601.htm>

From the issue dated June 8, 2007

Colleges Too Small for Prime Time Take Sports Online

Webcasting brings untelevised games to loyal fans

By DAN CARNEVALE

Karen DiFelice is a huge Bobcats fan. Not the NBA team in North Carolina. Not the Ohio University team. Not even the Bobcats of Montana State University. No, Ms. DiFelice is a devoted follower of the little-known Bobcats of Georgia College & State University, in Milledgeville, Ga. She has been watching every baseball game she can catch this season.

The games, however, are not on television. And because she lives 800 miles away in Philadelphia, she cannot get to the stands in person.

Instead, Ms. DiFelice watches the games on her computer screen as they are Webcast by the university. So do more than 300 other rabid Bobcats fans. She has a personal reason to watch, too. Her son, Brett, is a freshman outfielder.

"For us, not to be there is just killing us," Ms. DiFelice says. The Webcasts are "our only link."

Many small colleges have a dedicated fan base for their sports, yet ESPN won't be coming to places like Milledgeville anytime soon. The solution for some has been Webcasting.

And they have found an audience. Faraway alumni are able to reconnect with their alma maters. Parents get to watch every time young Billy goes up to bat. And high-school athletes can determine if this is the team they want to play for.

Large universities have been Webcasting for years. But officials say even small colleges with tight budgets can afford to do it. At Georgia College & State, as many as 400 viewers at a time have tuned in to the Webcasts. Now Stan Aldridge, the university's athletics director, is hoping to raise money through advertising as the audience grows.

Another Georgia institution, Armstrong Atlantic State University, was an early Webcaster of its sporting events. Eddie Aenchbacher, athletics director at the university, says Armstrong Atlantic started covering basketball in 2001, and soon expanded to other sports, including volleyball, baseball, softball, and soccer. "We even did a tennis match one time," Mr. Aenchbacher says. "But I got a little scared because I was standing on top of a building holding a camera."

The Webcasts had their bumps. High-speed Internet cables do not run to the athletics fields, for instance. Eventually the university installed wireless access points to carry the signal back to the broadband connection.

The Webcasts have proved popular. At times several people in a neighborhood will gather to watch a game from afar. Troops in Iraq who have ties to the university have been known to watch. Even players' family members in Australia have gotten up at 3 a.m. to watch the Webcasts, says Mr. Aenchbacher.

In addition to connecting distant fans, the Webcasts act as a great recruiting tool, Mr. Aenchbacher says. Showing high-school prospects games online gives the university a competitive edge over other similar institutions, he says. It even nudges the parents into preferring Armstrong Atlantic if they know they can watch their children play online.

"Who can say that, at our level?" he says. "Division II doesn't get as much exposure as Division I gets."

Webcast Guru

These universities, as well as several others, credit their ability to Webcast to one man. James Leonard, professor of information technology at Macon State College, has been helping colleges Webcast sports for 15 years — starting first with audio-only transmissions and more recently getting involved with video. Any college, he says, can Webcast sports events without breaking the bank.

Colleges would need to buy one to three cameras and some electronic equipment. Students can run the Webcasts, sometimes even just for course credit.

The start-up costs can run to about \$30,000, using top-of-the-line equipment. But getting a decent Webcast up does not have to cost that much. Armstrong Atlantic spent only about \$5,000 for its start-up equipment.

"In the next few years, every college, to remain competitive, will have to Webcast its sports," Mr. Leonard says. "This is just a natural evolution."

Mr. Leonard has incorporated his video Webcasting project into an academic program at Macon State. Students from various disciplines, including broadcasting, communications, and computer science, enroll to get experience covering live sporting events. They have done such great work, he says, that he does not have to boss them around much anymore.

"Lately I've been more of a grunt person," Mr. Leonard says. "I switch batteries when they go bad, I get water for people — because the students really do a good job with it."

Rising Demand

Some colleges have sought help from companies to set up and deliver their Webcasts. Nada Usina, network president at XOS Technologies Inc., a company that provides Web services to athletics teams, says the demand for Webcasting games is growing. Last year the company had 40 clients and Webcast 7,000 games. This year XOS has 150 clients and plans to handle more than 12,000 games.

Ms. Usina says large sports powerhouses in the Big 12 conference and smaller institutions in the Big South may have different demands from the company, but both kinds of institutions need to keep their fans interested in their sports through online interactivity. "It's not that the fans are any less rabid," she says. "It's just a smaller fan base."

The University of Central Oklahoma is one of XOS's clients. Largely a commuter institution, with about 16,000 students, Central Oklahoma is smack-dab in between the state's two powerhouses — the

University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University.

"Our institution is probably not somewhere where a lot of kids say, 'This is where I want to go,'" says James M. Downer, the assistant director of athletics media relations. "We seem to be a fallback school."

Working with XOS, he says, the university has been able to develop an athletics Web site fit for a Division I program. Central Oklahoma pays \$10,000 per year for XOS's services, he says. In addition to showing live games, the site includes audio and video clips of games, up-to-date statistics, and interactive features.

The university's video Webcasts are pretty bare-bones, Mr. Downer says. Fans see multiple camera angles of the football games, but no graphics splashed on the screen. And the audio commentary is taken from the local radio broadcast.

Some institutions have gone so far as to make fans pay to watch the games online. Abilene Christian University, in Texas, charges \$89.95 for a year's subscription, or \$8.95 per month for those who, say, care only about football.

The number of subscribers varies by sport. Football gets 60 to 75 subscribers, says Jared Mosley, Abilene Christian's athletics director. Baseball gets about 30.

"For the most part, it's been well received," Mr. Mosley says. "We have a pretty loyal alumni group. They enjoy watching the games even when the teams are struggling through a season."

<http://chronicle.com>

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Athletics

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i40/40a03004.htm>

From the issue dated June 8, 2007

Athletics Programs Struggle to Diversify

By BRAD WOLVERTON

While more and more college athletes are members of racial and ethnic minority groups, the number of minority athletics administrators in decision-making positions has remained nearly unchanged over the past 10 years, according to a report from the NCAA.

The report, which jibes with the findings of annual reports on the issue by Richard E. Lapchick, director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, shows that the percentage of black athletics directors rose less than one-half of a percentage point from 1995-96 to 2005-6. Only about 8 percent of all athletics directors at NCAA member institutions, including historically black colleges, are black, the report says. Black associate athletics directors have made slightly more gains, rising in number by 0.8 percent in the past decade, but account for only 9 percent of all associate AD's.

In contrast, the number of black athletes competing at the NCAA's Division I level continues to rise along with the total number of athletes. African-Americans accounted for more than 20 percent of the total athlete population in the 2005-6 study, up nearly a percentage point from 2002-3 alone.

"The big takeaway from this report is that the growth is not being reflected in the numbers of individuals who are either choosing or receiving the opportunity to become assistant or head coaches, directors of athletics, and senior woman administrators," said Charlotte Westerhaus, vice president for diversity and inclusion at the National Collegiate Athletic Association. "There appears to be a ceiling that's preventing growth, and there's a need for some answers and action to remedy this."

<http://chronicle.com>

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Today's News

Thursday, June 7, 2007

Report by Gender-Equity Advocates Shows Increases in Athletics Participation by Men and Women

By [SARA LIPKA](#)

Much of the debate over federal gender-equity law in college sports centers on the question of whether it denies athletics opportunities to men. Amid claims that current regulations cause colleges to cut men's teams, the Women's Sports Foundation issued a resounding rejoinder this week, saying that participation of both men and women in college athletics has increased over time.

The [report](#), "Who's Playing College Sports?," looks at how participation rates changed at 738 institutions over 10 years (from the 1995-6 academic year to 2004-5), and at 1,895 institutions over four years (2001-2 to 2004-5).

The first sample shows substantial growth in participation, reflecting especially the many women's teams colleges added in the late 1990s. By 2004-5, 26,000 more female and 7,000 more male athletes were playing for those 738 colleges, the report says.

The larger sample also shows considerable growth over the four-year period. During that time, participation rose by 11,000 female and 10,000 male athletes, according to the report, which is by John Cheslock, an assistant professor of education at the University of Arizona. It relies on data reported to the U.S. Department of Education by colleges beginning in 2000-1, and on data collected by the Women's Sports Foundation in 1995-6.

Though some men's sports -- tennis, volleyball, and wrestling -- have indeed seen declines in numbers of athletes, teams, or both, other sports -- baseball, football, lacrosse, and soccer -- have grown enough to offset those losses, the report says. Likewise, although men's participation has gone down in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's most competitive division (formerly known as Division I-A and now called the Football Bowl Subdivision), it has remained steady in the rest of Division I and increased substantially in Divisions II and III, according to the report.

Some advocates for men's teams, notably in wrestling, have called for changes in the regulations for compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the landmark gender-equity law. They say that colleges should survey male and female students to gauge their respective interest in participating in sports, an option for complying with the law that experts debated last month before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights ([The Chronicle](#), May 14).

This week's report argues strongly for protection of the law, which gender-equity advocates see as under attack ([The Chronicle](#), April 2).

"Title IX does not need to be reformed to stop large overall decreases in men's athletic participation because such decreases have not occurred," the report says. "The debate over Title IX should not be

based on the experience of a few individual sports."

An appendix to the report rebuts two studies that show overall declines in men's athletics participation: one by the federal government's General Accounting Office in 1999, and another by the College Sports Council, an advocacy group for men's sports, this year. Both studies used incomplete data, and the latter relied on inaccurate estimates, the new report says.

A spokesman for the College Sports Council said on Wednesday that he stood by his group's [report](#). Other studies inflate men's participation rates to cover up declines, said the spokesman, Jim McCarthy.

But arguing over whether men have lost opportunities draws attention away from the main point, says the report from the Women's Sports Foundation, an advocacy group founded by the tennis star Billie Jean King in 1974. Women's athletics opportunities still lag behind men's, the report says. In 2004-5, women made up 55.8 percent of the student population for the study's larger sample, but at the same time they represented only 41.7 percent of college athletes.

The women's sports group also released a report card that grades 1,895 colleges on "proportionality," one means of compliance with Title IX. For an institution to meet that test, its percentage of female athletes must match the proportion of all undergraduates who are female. To colleges with gaps of less than two percentage points, the foundation assigns an A, but if the discrepancy is more than 22 percentage points, the institution gets an F. About a fifth of the colleges included get failing grades.

Mr. McCarthy said he worried that institutions with F's, for fear of lawsuits under Title IX, would cut men's teams to "become proportional overnight."

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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Athletics

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i40/40a03005.htm>

From the issue dated June 8, 2007

NCAA to Review Pregnancy Guidelines

By BRAD WOLVERTON

Myles Brand, the NCAA's president, has asked its Committee on Women's Athletics to review the association's guidelines and policies for pregnant athletes.

The decision came after an explosive report last month on ESPN's *Outside the Lines* program, which revealed that several Clemson University women's basketball players, fearing the loss of their scholarships because of pregnancy, had gotten abortions. The television network's report also described how some institutions may be violating federal law by taking away the scholarships of pregnant athletes.

NCAA bylaws allow female students an extra year of eligibility if they become pregnant, and the association's sports-medicine manual provides some guidance on medical concerns related to pregnant athletes. But decisions about the participation of pregnant athletes are made at the campus level.

Only about 50 institutions have written policies to protect pregnant athletes, says Elizabeth Sorensen, a professor of nursing at Wright State University, in Ohio. That is up from only a handful of colleges that had policies last year ([The Chronicle](#), May 26, 2006).

<http://chronicle.com>

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Thursday, June 7, 2007

Fans can now watch early selections

By C. Trent Rosecrans

Post staff reporter

Reds senior director of scouting Chris Buckley isn't exactly sure how today's First-Year Player Draft will go, all he knows is that it will be different, not just because it will be televised for the first time.

Despite the differences between the baseball draft and drafts in the NFL, NBA and even NHL, with ESPN2 carrying the first round of the draft live this year, in a few years you could get Philadelphia fans coming to the baseball draft just to boo whoever the Phillies pick. In the past, the draft was done mostly over speakerphone and in relative anonymity.

That won't be the case, as representatives from all 30 teams meet at Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., near Orlando.

"We're all anxious to see how it plays out," Buckley said. "It's always an exciting day, because it will be televised, it's going to be a lot different."

The biggest difference will be time. The baseball draft goes a maximum of 50 rounds, but under the old system, teams would get through about 18-to-20 rounds in the first day. That probably won't be the case this time.

"It's just more time between picks," Reds general manager Wayne Krivsky said. "It used to be 20 seconds, now it's going to be more drawn out. We'll call in our picks to Jim Thrift or Ken Griffey Sr. and I'm not sure where it'll go from there. It's just going to drag it out."

Thrift and Griffey will be the Reds' representatives in Florida actually making the picks for the TV cameras, while the Reds brain trust will be in Cincinnati and call in the picks to Thrift and Griffey.

"Ken Griffey Sr. is a very visible representative of the Cincinnati Reds, with his son a member of the team and he's a former Red," Buckley said. "Major League Baseball wants this to be as visible as the NFL or NBA drafts."

The biggest difference, though, is few people watching the MLB draft will know much about the name called when their favorite team is called.

Baseball America has the Reds selecting Texas high school third baseman Kevin Ahrens with the 15th selection in the first round, which doesn't create the kind of buzz like the chance to pick Greg Oden or Kevin Durrant. Vanderbilt left-handed pitcher David Price is expected to be the top pick overall by the Devil Rays.



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"It's a lot different, because your viewing public doesn't know the players, it's not like we're drafting a running back from Ohio State," Buckley said. "With ESPN covering college baseball pretty well, this is the first year the draft will be interesting."

The draft is also different for teams, because they aren't looking for immediate help like in the other sports.

"In the NFL and NBA they're finished products, in this draft there aren't too many that's the big difference," Krivsky said.

Like Buckley said, the quickest a prospect can realistically be expected to get to the major leagues is three years and by that time, needs can change significantly through development, trades and free agency.

"We need to keep taking high-quality players," Buckley said.

That three-year timetable is exactly what the Reds' top prospect, right-hander Homer Bailey, will have made when the 2004 first-round pick makes his debut for the Reds on Friday. The 2005 first round pick, outfielder Jay Bruce, is hitting .323 with 10 home runs for the Class A Sarasota Reds and last season's top pick, outfielder Drew Stubbs is hitting .264 with six home runs at low Class A Dayton.

None of the three, coincidentally all from the state of Texas, were widely known by Reds fans until draft day.

Today Reds faithful will get a quicker look at their next top prospect, but when the name is called, it will still likely be the first time anyone's going to have heard of that player.

The draft has two new rules that could decrease the cost of signing first-round players. Teams that fail to sign a first-rounder will receive a nearly identical pick in the next draft. That lessens a player's leverage.

Also, all teams must sign their picks by August 15.

Agent Scott Boras had used a tactic of prolonging negotiations into the next year.

The rule also eliminates the so-called "draft-and-follow" picks where a team would select a player and then place him in a junior college and sign him before the next draft.

Buckley selected Diamondbacks second baseman Orlando Hudson as a draft-and-follow when he was with Toronto. Indians first baseman Travis Hafner and Houston pitcher Roy Oswalt are other examples.

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s Bulldogs' attendance policy working

Published 6/7/07 in *The Times-Herald*

By CHARLES ODUM, AP Sports Writer
sports@newnan.com

ATLANTA (AP) — When Georgia officials tried to find a way to make student-athletes show up for classes and academic appointments, athletic director Damon Evans made a bold proposal:

Unexcused absences should bring \$10 fines or game suspensions.

After examining the effects of the attendance policy, introduced in January, Evans concluded Wednesday "It's the right thing for us to do."

Georgia officials say the policy deserves credit for a strong academic showing this spring.

For the first time, more than 50 percent of Georgia's student-athletes made 3.0 or better grade point averages in the spring semester.

Also, when compared with last spring, there were far fewer dropped classes and a sharp increase in credit hours earned — 954 this spring, compared with 770 last spring, according to Ted White, Georgia's director of academic services.

"It's a great sign," White said.

Word of Georgia's early success with the policy has spread. Georgia is receiving calls from other schools interested in starting similar programs.

"It's exactly what we want," Evans said. "We want our individuals going to class and getting a quality education."

The policy produced dramatic results in its first month.

In a three-week period in January, student-athletes missed 46 classes or academic appointments, a 90 percent drop from 421 over a three-week period in September.

White said adding the fine to the attendance policy was "a stroke of genius on Damon's part."

"They say 'I don't want to owe 10 bucks, so I'm going to show up,'" White said.

"For some students, it's the one thing though that stops them from missing more appointments."

The money is donated to United Way.

Evans said he wants academics to be treated with at least as much respect as athletics.

"How many of them are going to skip practice?" Evans asked. "We don't have a problem with kids skipping practice, so we shouldn't have a problem with them skipping a class or an academic appointment. That's what I want them to know. It's not OK to skip an academic appointment."

"Kids aren't going to compete if they miss practice. You go to practice to get prepared for competition. You go to class and to your academic appointment so you can get prepared for your tests and do well. We've got to hold those at the same level, and to be quite candid, the academic component should be held at a higher standard."

Other athletic departments may follow Georgia's lead.

At its annual spring meetings last week, the Southeastern Conference passed legislation that requires each school to make an attendance policy for student-athletes.

"We were very proactive with this, and now to see it has become adopted by the conference, that's a step in the right direction," Evans said.

White said the Georgia policy will be discussed this weekend in Phoenix at the annual meeting of the National Association of Academic Advisors for Athletics.

"We get calls all the time from schools about this," White said. "I've already been contacted by a number of people who want to put together an impromptu seminar this weekend. A lot of schools are interested."

According to Georgia's policy, student-athletes who miss more than two classes in the same course will be suspended for about 10 percent of their team's games for each additional class they miss.

Student-athletes who miss more than one academic appointment must pay a \$10 fine. They face suspensions for missing more than four.

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Thursday, Jun 7, 2

Posted on Mon, Jun. 04, 2007

It's full speed ahead for Jurich

UofL's AD gets national honor

By Russ Brown

KENTUCKY.COM

LOUISVILLE — The University of Louisville's Tom Jurich may be the Athletic Director of the Year, but don't expect him to rest on his laurels. Not for a minute.

During a press conference Monday to announce his selection as the 2007 Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal/Sports Business Daily national AD of the Year, Jurich proclaimed that, "We've only just begun."

If so, it's been quite a start, because it's been a remarkable 10 years for Jurich at UofL, marked by an unprecedented growth in sports and facilities, an eye-opening coup with the hiring of Rick Pitino as the men's basketball coach, a move to the Big East Conference, a planned expansion of Papa John's Cardinal Stadium, a new downtown arena and a new men's basketball/volleyball practice facility due to open in August.

Jurich has already overseen the opening of more than \$150 million in facilities in the past decade.

And 2007 has brought the most successful year in UofL athletic history, with an Orange Bowl championship, six Big East championships and a surprising run by the Cardinal baseball team in the NCAA Tournament. With Monday's 16-6 rout of No. 11 Missouri, UofL advanced to the Super Regional — college baseball's Sweet Sixteen — for the first time in school history and is just two victories away from the College World Series.

In all, UofL sent representatives from 17 of its 22 sports to NCAA post-season competition, and 12 Cardinal teams earned top 25 rankings. In addition to the unexpected success of the baseball team, UofL's men's track team is ranked No. 6 nationally, and six Cardinal athletes qualified for the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Sacramento, Calif., this week.

"We're going to still be a work in progress," Jurich said. "We have a lot of things to accomplish and we want to continue to grow at a very rapid pace. I just see us getting better. I love the Big East. I think the Big East has exceeded all our expectations."

The prestigious Street and Smith's award, presented by the leading sports business trade publication in the country, recognizes Jurich's leadership in building the across the board success of Louisville's athletics program. He will receive the award at the National Association of Collegiate Athletic Directors awards luncheon in Orlando, Fla., Friday. Florida AD Jeremy Foley won the award last year.

Jurich said the award really belongs to his staff and coaches.

"It's not an 'I' award, it's a 'you' award," he told them as they greeted him with applause outside his office in the Student Activities Center. "So congratulate yourself."

Later at the press conference, Jurich said, "I didn't see this coming. I think any time you win anything like this it's just a great reflection of this department and all the people we have working in it. That's who I want to enjoy this award. This is not about me and I really mean that. I'm very humbled they would even think of me.

"When your peers and other people look at you and like what we're doing here, it's a great statement about the athletic department. It's not a statement about Tom Jurich. People are taking notice of it, and that's all you can ask for. We're in a great situation, it's a great community and a great state. I feel very, very blessed."

Jurich said he took a big risk when he left Colorado State to take the UofL job in 1997, succeeding Bill Olsen. One of his first major moves was to fire football coach Ron Cooper following a 1-10 season and hire John L. Smith. Then he became embroiled in controversy when he made it clear he wanted to replace long-time — and very popular — basketball coach Denny Crum, who wound up resigning under pressure after a 12-19 season in 2001.

The very public Jurich-Crum feud and power struggle divided the UofL athletic community, a split that has only recently healed — thanks in large part to Jurich and Pitino's success, Crum's continued support of UofL and its athletic programs and the naming of the Freedom Hall basketball court as Denny Crum Court.

After Crum's departure, Jurich took what he described as the biggest risk of his career when he targeted Pitino, who

had just resigned as coach and president of the Boston Celtics, to succeed Crum.

"I think the biggest risk we took was going after coach Pitino without a doubt, because it had to happen," Jurich said. "There was no plan B. We had to make darn sure we got the right coach in here to turn this thing around, and what scared me to death was we had that 5/8 rule in place so you couldn't recruit.

"You could get five players in one year and no more than eight in two years. Today you could hire Rick Pitino and he'd clean house and have 14 great signees the next day, but it didn't work that way then. So that was the biggest risk — I put all my eggs in one basket and we had to make it happen. Thank God he did it."

A lengthy story about Jurich and his accomplishments appears in the current issue of Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal under the headline: "The Cardinals' can-do man. How Tom Jurich makes things happen at the University of Louisville."

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Scout.com > Oklahoma



Early Signing Period... For or Against?

Jamie Newberg
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There are many pros and cons in terms of adding an early signing period for college football recruiting. But the numbers don't lie and those numbers could be just too great to ignore. Over the past five years the early commitments are up an astounding 500%. What will college football recruiting and the early commitments be like in just a few years?

I have covered college football recruiting since 1992. During that time I have always been on the fence of college football adopting an early signing period in recruiting, like they have in college basketball. Well, I am no longer on the fence.

For many years National Signing Day has always fallen on the first Wednesday in February. It's actually great timing because the first Wednesday of the second month certainly allows for enough time for the blue-chip football prospects to make up their minds on their college football destinations.

More times than not, most college football prospects would play out their senior seasons. Sure some would commit early, maybe in the spring or summer months leading up to their final year of high school. Most would wait, make mainly unofficial visits during the season and make the all important official visits in December and January, before making their verbal commitment.

This is how things were done, leading up to the final ten weeks of the recruiting season.

That was then and this is now. College football recruiting is changing. No longer are most college football prospects waiting to make their verbal commitments in December or January. Now prospects all across the country are pledging to a school earlier and earlier in the process.

My how things have changed, just look at this decade. By June 1, 2003, 61 prospects made commitments to schools from a BCS conference. That same number as of last Friday (June 1) was 323. In five short years the number of commitments just during the spring is up an astounding 500%! By June 1, 2004 the number of early verbals was 118 and on the same date in 2005 and 2006 the numbers were 122 and 196 respectively. The number of commitments between June 1 and the end of July could be equally as startling considering the popularity of the summer camps and summer unofficial visits. There will be a ton of verbal commitments over the next eight weeks to teams everywhere across the country.

Recruiting has trends and this may be biggest trends we have ever seen. Sure text messaging is big and certainly summer camps are popular. But nowadays droves of college football prospects, their coaches and families are getting out to schools (unofficial visits) and making their decisions long before they were just a mere five years ago.

Propelling the recruits' early decisions are college football teams extending scholarship offers earlier in the process. This means from Miami to Washington and all the programs in between teams have to start up their evaluation process earlier. Today, you better be organized, efficient and early in terms of recruiting or you will get left behind.

If there is one school that has certainly been ahead of the curve with the early verbal commitments it has been the University of Texas. It's not even close. Over the past two and a half years (this class included), the Longhorns signed an amazing 50 prospects from recruits that had committed to them by the first day of June prior to the start of the senior seasons. That number would even be higher had Texas not lost a handful of committed prospects to other schools. Now what people don't realize is that Texas won't officially offer a junior prospect until after Signing Day of their junior year. At the same time, because they get so many early

commitments, it affords the Texas coaching staff to start the evaluation process on rising sophomores and juniors earlier than anyone. This is an incredible advantage for Mack Brown and company. To make matters even stronger for UT, they are blessed to be the flag ship in the deepest state (Texas) in terms of college football recruiting.

"We would be for an early signing period," said Associate Head Coach and Offensive Line Coach Mac McWhorter. "I guess Texas is kind of getting blamed for all of this (early signing day) talk."

Why are we seeing so many young men pull the trigger and make this early commitment? There is a multitude of reasons but mainly because of the process itself. Sure it's fun for the kids, their families and coaches when it starts. But after a few months it simply becomes overwhelming, especially for the bluest of the blue-chippers. The pressure is enormous and recruiting is taxing. The magnitude is multiplied ten fold by the coverage of recruiting itself and the hard sell by all the college coaches. That's what the beast of college football recruiting has evolved in to.

As with anything else in life there is even evolution in college football recruiting. This can be a good thing for many of the players involved and it doesn't matter what side of the fence you are on. If you are a prospect and you know what college football team you want to play for, then great, make that early decision and enjoy your final year of high school like you should. It only happens once. If you are a coach and you lose a prospect to another school, well then, call it a day with John Doe and move on the next prospect. At least you know where you stand and you can stop wasting your time and money and get on the next recruit.

"I am intrigued and absolutely for an early signing period," said Minnesota Head Coach Tim Brewster. "I am totally open to this idea because that is the direction recruiting is going. Everything is now speeded up in the recruiting process and we are all kidding ourselves that this (early signing period) wouldn't be a positive thing. It's up to us, as coaches, to do our part and utilize all of our resources to make this happen and make it work. An early signing period would allow the kids to relax. At the same time, schools wouldn't have to spend an over excessive amount of time, energy and money recruiting players that are already committed to us."

The numbers are there. It's happening right before our eyes. Pretty soon, the vast majority of college football prospects will be committed and done before the first kickoff of the fall season. It may not be that way this year or even next. But the huge trend is for the early commitment, and sooner rather than later the numbers will be staggering. The numbers will be too great to ignore. To compensate, the NCAA, the AFCA and the powers that be must incorporate an early signing period some time in the very near future. If not, and if things continue on this path college football recruiting will become even more chaotic than what it has already become.

Last week at the SEC meetings in Destin, Florida, the SEC coaches voted down an early signing period (December) by a vote of 9-3. For the record the coaches that were in favor of it were Les Miles (LSU), Bobby Johnson (Vanderbilt) and Rich Brooks (Kentucky). Meanwhile, a recent vote by the Big 12 coaches was unanimous in favor of an early signing period.

What would it take for an early signing period to be a successful signing period for all involved? First the timing has to be right. In my opinion a December signing day is too late in the process. If you had an early signing period on the first Wednesday of December it's only a mere eight to nine weeks before the current National Signing Day and smack dab in the middle of the bowl season. Sure there are some positives that would bring. It would save coaches some time and money with the in-home visits and perhaps it would save some recruits and their families the pains and pressures of the "late recruiting process." Prospects that committed early to a school and if that school had a coaching change; they would then have time to decide if they wanted to stay with their original decision. More or less, the recruiting calendar would not have to be altered.

"I am against an early signing period as the way things stand right now," said Ole Miss Head Coach Ed Orgeron. "We (SEC) are kicking around the idea of potentially having one in December. It's the wrong time and schools just don't have the man power. If you have an early signing period in December it would take away from all the college football teams that are preparing for bowl games. To make matters worse it would put more pressure on teams and prospects to make official visits during the season. Either leave it the way it is, where we have two months in December and January to really concentrate and finish off recruiting, or make an early signing period in the summer. But if that happened they would have to change the recruiting calendar. That is something I would be open to."

To be most effective, an early signing period would have to be before the season. Sometime in August would be fine but I honestly believe the best time would be the last Wednesday in July. First, the numbers of commitments are there and growing by an enormous amount every year. Having an early signing period in late July allows for the prospects that want to make an early decision time to make unofficial visits during the summer. A decision to sign or not to sign is up to the prospect. But if they decided to sign early it would be before the start of two-a-day practices in August at the high school and college level. With the decision behind them they could now concentrate on their senior year with no distractions of recruiting.

But there are two potential problems with a July or August signing day. First, there are many prospects that don't have the means to make unofficial visits or attend summer camps. In addition, many schools don't have the luxury to get "that far ahead" in the recruiting process to extend scholarship offers without a proper and thorough evaluation. So in turn the NCAA would need to alter the current recruiting calendar so it would be possible for official visits to be made at some time during the months of May, June and or July. Colleges could host prospects for official visits on any day of the week in the summer. Therefore, prospects could have ample time to visit the schools they are seriously considering.

"I am not in favor for an early signing period," said South Florida Head Coach Jim Leavitt. "I might be if they changed rules. The bottom line is that you have to interact with young people (recruits) and with the rules right now you can't do that. You would have to see them in the summer, face to face. If not, absolutely not. Right now, with the way things are going so fast, it's not fair to the players. We (South Florida) are not pushing for early commitments because we have to be thorough."

Second, what would happen to a recruit that signed early with a school that eventually made a coaching change later on that fall or winter? Under the current Letter of Intent (LOI), a school is not obligated to release a prospect from his LOI once it is signed. In fact, there is even a clause in the LOI that says a prospect signs with a school because of the school and not because of the coach.

In basketball this happens a lot, where a player will sign with a school during the early signing period (November) only to see that school go through a coaching change. They are obligated to still attend that school unless the school gives that prospect a full release. More and more prospects are being released from their LOI and free to sign with anyone during the second signing period (April). What would happen in football? This is something that would have to be addressed.

Think of what an early signing period, at the right time of year, would bring to college football recruiting. Most importantly, prospects that know where they want to attend college can get the process out of the way. In turn, college football coaches and teams would know where they stand because of the early signing period. In other words, if a player is committed to your school and they sign, you got them wrapped up. If a player is committed to your school and they waiver and don't sign then you know you have one on the fence. Put up or shut up. This will certainly curb the prospects that commit to a school and waiver or commit to a school and decide to make more official or unofficial visits to different colleges. That's still going to happen but schools will know who is serious and who is not.

It will also curtail the prospect that commits to a school just to commit for security. There are many prospects out there that do just that but continue to tell other coaches to continue to recruit them. This still will happen but at least everyone would know where a player stands by that early signing period. The same olds true for the college football teams. They would be held accountable for the scholarship offers they extend. It works both ways. There are certain teams that offer dozens and dozens of prospects very early (a year before they are set to sign their National Letters of Intent). With an early signing period this could slow down some of that.

"I am against an early signing period," said Florida Head Coach Urban Meyer. "People are speeding up the process now and we are seeing so many commitments. It's not good for recruiting because kids can't explore all of their options. It's like marrying the first girl you date. Things are happening to quickly and schools are offering earlier and putting a lot of pressure on these prospects to make a decision."

Say you are a team that has 22 scholarships to give and you sign 10 prospects during that early signing period on that last Wednesday in July. You are completely done with ten prospects and only have a dozen spots left. You know that going into the fall. Therefore, this will save you time, energy, and money. You can now focus your recruiting efforts on a smaller pool of players making things easier for you as well as all the prospects still left out

there on the board.

So why has this not happened already? Why there isn't an early signing period in football like there is in basketball? First of all the numbers (commitments) were just not there before but they are now. Secondly, will there really be enough time for recruits to make an informed decision with an early signing period. Thirdly, the schools that wield the power like the idea of how things are now because they can fall back and take advantage of the smaller, less powerful programs. For instance, a college football power can lose a recruiting battle to another school. More times then not they don't hold that scholarship until next season. They use it and offer a prospect that could have been committed to another school. So many times a school can do a great job of evaluating early, offer a player, commit a player, only to lose him at the end. It happens all the time, every year, to just about every school that's not considered a power. Even survival of the fittest applies to college football.

"We (Troy) are all for it (an early signing period)," said Troy Offensive Coordinator Tony Franklin. "There are guys that we will offer and get only to lose to a bigger school late in the process. The bigger schools will slow play them and they can get them in the end. The bottom line is that it should be about the kids and to have a signing day in July would take so much pressure off of them."

It should be about the kids. It should also be about control because right now recruiting is out of control. An early signing period in July or even August, coupled with some alterations to the recruiting calendar and to the LOI (in terms of a potential coaching change), make sense. The numbers don't lie and they are only climbing. Every year over the past six recruiting seasons the number of verbal commitments by June 1 has increased. Those numbers six years ago compared to today are amazing. What will those commitment numbers be in 2010? What will they be in 2015?

The recruiting industry has drastically changed and evolved since 1992, when I first began in this business. The recruiting game has changed and has changed quickly before our very eyes. It's time for the NCAA and all the powers that be to make some changes as well.

I am off the fence and finally in favor of an early signing period for college football recruiting.

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