

January 4, 2005

**FOOTBALL WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
BREAKFAST MEETING**

A Session With:

KEVIN WEIBERG

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, good morning, everyone. I'm fighting a little bit of a cold here, so I hope my voice holds up, or at least that's an excuse not to have to answer too many questions this morning.

I do appreciate the opportunity to be with you, and I thank all of you once again for your coverage of college football. We certainly understand that the exposure that you provide for us is very beneficial to us, even though you don't always write things that maybe we agree with or we feel are overly complimentary of what's going on in college football. Nonetheless, we know you're an important part of the public's view of what we do, and I'm pleased to have a chance to interact with you a little bit this morning.

I do want to make a few comments about the Bowl Championship Series before I open it up for questions, and I'll do that in just a moment. First of all, I want to say thank you to ADT for their support of college football. That's much appreciated. Those security services are ones that I think I'm valuing more and more based on the email that I've been getting from fans around the country (laughter) and some of those kinds of things.

Let me just say a few words here at the outset about the Bowl Championship Series. I think that there has been so much written and said about it in the course of the last several years that sometimes a little bit of perspective maybe drifts away from what this is all about, and I wanted to take this opportunity to make a few comments about, at least from my perspective and those of my colleagues who are involved in the day-to-day management of it, what the BCS is and what it is not because a lot of things get assigned to it on an annual basis, and if you'll permit me to do that, and then I think I'll open it up for some questions.

Some of this is pretty rudimentary, but I thought it was important to say it. First of all, the BCS is an attempt to match the top two rated teams at a Bowl Game at season's end without extending the length of the season, at least in terms of the number of games that are played. This is something that has occurred as you know on a somewhat infrequent basis prior to the

creation of the BCS, and I think it's very important to remember, even though this is a very simple matter, that tonight's game would really not have been possible prior to the BCS. In fact, I think I've told several of you that I've talked with individually that it's very likely without this structure we would have had these three teams spread across three different Bowl Games, and that's something we shouldn't lose sight of.

In addition, the BCS I think is a system that is complementary to the overall Bowl structure. Only four games are a part of the BCS structure. There are 24 other Bowl Games presently, and those games do provide meaningful season-ending opportunities to teams.

I've watched many of these games in the last several days, and I've attended some of them, and I am struck by the celebration that occurs around each and every one of those games, and also the fact that the teams that win those games end their season in a way, at least if you're present -- I know I was able to get down to the Texas locker room in Pasadena afterwards. It felt very much like winning the championship for that team and that coaching staff, and I think that's repeated really across the Bowl system on an annual basis.

The BCS also without question places great premium on the regular season of college football, and it really is of great importance to us that the regular season remain strong and vibrant. I think it's important when I think about that to remember also the economics of college football a little bit because unlike the NFL, much of our revenues that are generated that support athletic programs across the board come from those regular season revenues. Ticket sales and related game day revenues are very, very important to us, and they are really driven by that regular season schedule to a large extent.

I know in my conference, the college football weekend is a very important part of the overall institutional experience, not just what occurs in the athletic department, and without question these college football weekends remain a significant part in bringing alumni and others back to our campuses.

Now, a few things about what the BCS is not. It is not a playoff system. It is not designed to do anything more than attempt to match the No. 1 and No. 2 teams through the Bowl system and to reward conference champions with a major Bowl

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berth at season's end. I have to tell you, I really do not see an NFL-style playoff coming to college football any time soon.

As you know, we have an agreement in place now with Fox Sports for a television agreement with the BCS through the 2010 season, and I think it's very important to note that the ABC Television Network has an agreement with the **Rose Bowl** through 2014, and as you all have many times reported, college presidents and chancellors have really expressed no interest, at least up to this point, in the expansion of the post-season in terms of additional games in that post-season.

The BCS is also not a corrupt system, as a few have said and reported recently. All 11 division 1-A conferences participate in the management of the structure and decisions regarding things like the components of BCS standings formula are determined by vote of that group with approval by a presidential oversight committee whose representation cuts across all 117 division 1-A programs.

It is also not an exclusive system that rewards only a few. The **University of Utah** demonstrated this year that a team from a conference without an annual automatic berth can have access to a BCS Bowl Game, and that was even under the previous system of rankings in terms of qualification for that structure.

As you know, as we go forward into a future agreement that begins the year after next, access has been expanded significantly for teams without an automatic berth and revenue sharing in that future structure, 18 percent of the net revenue will go to conferences that don't have an annual automatic berth.

In the first 8 years of the BCS structure, which will end with next year's Bowl Games, over \$40 million will have been provided to conferences that don't have an annual automatic berth in the system. You have to put that in some historical perspective in the sense that in particular, these particular Bowls, there has never been a structure of revenue sharing that existed prior to the Bowl Championship Series.

As we roll forward with new levels of access and revenue sharing, that money could grow to as much as \$70 million for those conferences in the future.

Now, we have a lot of work to do in this off-season. That probably goes without saying. We clearly have issues to deal with relative to the standings formula that has been used to determine the 1-2 match-up and also some of the access points in the system.

We also have to continue to work to address the future automatic qualification provisions for conferences, which will be a significant part of the work ahead of us here in the weeks and months ahead, and we have work to do relative to incorporating a fifth game into the structure, which has been the model that has been approved, and related associations that will flow from that.

We have a significant amount of work to do as we implement a two-network model for the BCS structure with both Fox and ABC having an involvement.

It's a pretty full plate over the course of the next 90 to 120 days. I don't know that we'll have all of those issues resolved in that period of time, but I think you can see that the agenda is not just about figuring out what to do, for example, with the departure of the AP Poll from the system. There's a lot of other things to do.

Once again, I very much appreciate the chance to speak with you today. I think at this point I'm going to open it for your questions.

Q. You've been quoted about the concept of having some sort of committee structure, the 1-2 -- (inaudible). I know all the arguments are against it now given the AP decision to pull out. Is that going to be a discussion, and are you personally -- (inaudible).

KEVIN WEIBERG: Addressing the latter part, I think I'm very interested in it. Obviously we have to do something at this point with the standings formula, and I can see some merit that could exist around a committee structure, although I think it will have to be carefully designed and it will have to be a really good set of responsibility structure for such a committee, but I'm interested in it.

As I told Malcolm the other day, I'm not prepared to endorse it because I want to hear more about the discussion with my colleagues, and I think we certainly need to take a look and see whether there are alternatives in terms of whether there is another poll that could perhaps be plugged into to the spot that was there for the AP poll. Nevertheless, I think it's an idea that has to be reviewed.

I think the second part of your question was just the timetable. I think it is one that we're going to have to move on here with some urgency. We want to obviously do the best job we can to try and think it through, but ideally we'd like to be in a position by April and have a pretty good sense of

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where we're going.

Q. Given the focus of what they're doing, how much pressure is there?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I think it would be a tough assignment, and as you know, I've served on the basketball committee and have a sense of just the pressures that you're under relative to that assignment, picking out large teams, 34 and 35, the seeding process, et cetera, and I know I have respect for those of you in this room who participated as voters in the AP Poll this past season and I know the kinds of issues that surrounded that process. I don't believe it would be an easy assignment, and I think my sense is, though, there would be people that would be willing to serve and that care a lot about college football, that have been tied to it in the past, that are part of institutions now that would likely step forward. Nonetheless, I think it would be a tough assignment.

Q. (Inaudible).

KEVIN WEIBERG: I think that's a fair statement, at least as I have thought about it conceptually at this point. I don't believe a 10-person committee, which is I believe the basketball committee structure, would probably work in a football model.

Q. So 20, 30, 40, is there a number?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Not really. We have not begun yet to put anything to paper or really to sit down and talk about it.

Q. Is too big an argument given -- (inaudible). Is that true in your judgment, and which one is bigger? If it all came down to one, which one is frankly the real reason?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, I think clearly since I work for presidents and chancellors, I can't set aside the importance of the presence of college presidents and chancellors. Without a doubt they set direction in college sports these days, and as long as there remains a strong objection to exploring expansion of the post-season, that's a significant stumbling block. I think you know that.

At the same time, even among many commissioners, coaches, there is a great desire to see the Bowl system sustained as we go forward, and I think that both of those really are ongoing dual issues that are problematic to the player structure.

I know many people talk and write about the need for a playoff, and I do receive a lot of emails, and by saying this I hope it doesn't

increase to even more emails about playoff ideas, but I have yet to really see one, in my own view of it, that is one that I think is workable in terms of the multi-tiered NFL style playoff structure. There are a number of complications associated with logistics of such a structure when you start talking about multiple post-season games.

Q. Are you concerned about the TV ratings being down for the BCS games so far this year?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I didn't see the overnights from last night, but I thought we actually did fairly well on day one. You have to remember that the **Rose Bowl** last year had the great story surrounding **Southern Cal** and the interest and that being really for all practical purposes a second championship game. So from my perspective I thought the **Rose Bowl** rating was a pretty darn good number.

We certainly knew that the match-up with **Utah** and **Pittsburgh** could be one that would produce a slightly lower rating this year, but I thought the game held its own fairly well. I think we have a chance depending on what happens here tonight to be in not a bad spot coming out of these games.

I think you also have to put it in perspective of the overall network television situation these days. To produce the kinds of numbers that we're producing in terms of audiences is still a pretty strong position when you look at other types of major programming networks.

Q. If it really is the way y'all decide to go, would you decide to pick one versus two or do all the games?

KEVIN WEIBERG: That's something I don't know the answer to at this point. I think there is a range of options related to it. Clearly the one and two match-up I think would have to be such a responsibility. You could also have a committee involved in determining a pool of at-large teams for possible selection by the Bowls, or you could theoretically stop at one and two and give more responsibility to our Bowl partners to select teams at that point, but I think all of those things we're going to have to take a look at.

I do not envision, at least from my own perspective, a committee structure that would be involved in making Bowl match-ups or actually selecting teams to fill the positions, because I believe, once again, that this is a system built around Bowl Games, and it's important that Bowls

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have the opportunity to select teams that make sense for them inside that structure, particularly with the exception, of course, of the 1-2 match-up.

Q. I don't know that anyone uses the word corrupt to describe the system, but I think a lot of us have concerns about the transparency of the coaches' poll. What's the use of the coaches' poll from your personal viewpoint?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I think that's a fair question, and I've said throughout the course of this year, for my own personal preference, I believe those votes should be public. To **Grant Taft's** credit, I think he continues to work with the Coaches' Association to try to move in that direction, at least as it relates to the final poll of the coaches, and I think that could well be an important part of our decision-making process as we weigh the alternatives between a committee structure as opposed to continuing with some sort of a poll system.

Q. What is Grant doing specifically?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I know that Grant spent a lot of time through the course of this season talking to actual voters, and in fact, it's my understanding that they did give some consideration in this particular year to releasing their final vote, and it was rejected I think by a very small margin. I know they're planning on coming back and revisiting that at their upcoming meeting, so I think it is going to be front and center on their agenda.

Q. What has been talked about to replace the AP Poll, if anything, and can you envision a deal where the coaches and the rankings alone, is that enough?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I've already said, and I would repeat here again today, personally, again, we haven't had a chance to sit down as a group yet and discuss these issues. Personally I don't believe that the coaches' poll and a combination of computers is sufficient. I think something else is going to have to happen there.

You all are very much aware of the issues from this season, the pressure that voters felt they were under. That would only seem to me to be enhanced and even more focus placed on the coaches' poll if we were to try to move in a direction that would only make use of that poll and some sort of computer component.

Q. Has anything been talked about what could replace it?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Oh, the AP Poll? We really have not had that chance yet to sit down and talk about it, so it's one I probably shouldn't speculate about at this point because we haven't had a chance to visit about it.

Maybe I'm overly optimistic about this, I think that's my nature, I think there might be writers out there that would still be interested in participating in some fashion. It might have to be more of a hybrid approach that might involved perhaps writers or might involve others who have been part of the sport historically but are retired from positions. It might be something that would look different. I don't know. That's all the types of things we have to give more thought to. But we have not had a chance to discuss it.

Q. Regarding your optimistic nature, I just wondered, what have been your observations of the public level of satisfaction of the system in the years you've been commissioner and now chairman?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, I think the public angst is certainly reflected by the coverage that the system received has continued to grow regarding it. Just reflecting back on the time that I've been around it, you know, the first few years we had issues that were controversial at times, who was playing in the system or whatever the case may be, but it didn't seem to rise to quite the level of scrutiny and criticism that is out there at this point. We have not taken any public opinion polls, so I can't really give you any scientific evidence of how the public may feel about it.

I do know that it's not unusual to have fans of teams who don't access the system to complain about it, and I would have to say that I think our people that are involved in the management of the BCS are realistic enough to know that whatever system we have in place is likely to still produce some of that criticism.

For example, even if we have the so-called plus-one model this year, I think there would have been a tremendous amount of debate and controversy about four and five, which we had anyway inside the system. So I'm not naive enough to think that I'm going to eliminate criticism by moving in a different direction or eliminate concern about the system.

Q. Talk about the transparency with the coaches' poll. Would a committee-type thing, would that be an anonymous vote and do you foresee problems that have been --

KEVIN WEIBERG: That's a fair question

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and one that would have to be thought through. First of all, as you all know, we still are going to have a need in whatever system we have, even with a committee, to have some sort of standings, because access points for conferences without annual automatic qualification are still tied to reaching a certain access number, so it would be very likely that even in a committee structure, there would have to be some sort of published standings. How often it would occur, I don't know, and then the issues you raise about votes of individuals on a committee being public I think would have to be thoroughly discussed.

Q. Is there any kind of an agreement with Fox that at some point -- (inaudible). Is there room in there for you to do that?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, I think, again, if you talk to the network people, and I know you do periodically and you saw the coverage regarding our coverage negotiations, it's no secret that every one of the folks we talked with would prefer to see us move in the direction of some sort of a plus-one type of approach. That was a very uniform message throughout our television negotiations. Interestingly enough, even from those networks who didn't appear to have a high level of interest.

I do believe that that was being expressed to us also to say to us that there's probably more revenue associated with that kind of a structure. I know there's also been a lot written that says that we're only in this for the money and a lot of decisions get made by our presidents and those involved in the management that don't just run toward trying to maximize the dollars. That's probably the clearest immediate example of that because I think the networks do have interest in a model that would look more like a playoff structure of some sort.

Q. Basketball committee is still -- there's a lot of prestige of getting on it, and athletic directors seem to want to be on it. Why do you sense or have a feeling for whether active ADs would participate in a committee because the whole idea of retired coaches and athletic directors just sounds a little strange.

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, I think you would have to have some participation of people that are currently involved in a direct way, and I think that representation would have to cut broadly across the conferences, so I don't envision such a structure having only six conferences represented, for example, but I think perhaps there could be a combination of those approaches that could make some sense, but once again, that's just my own

personal thinking about it. We have not had the benefit yet of a chance to really sit down and talk about it.

Q. Are you optimistic about getting much of this hammered out in Dallas?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, no, I think the first meeting -- you're talking the upcoming meeting?

Q. Yes.

KEVIN WEIBERG: No, I think we're just going to begin to get a sense of how people are thinking about it. I've read individual commissioners quoted as saying this or that up to this point, but I really haven't had a chance to sit down in a room and find out where the consensus may be, if there is one, and I think maybe we'll get an idea of that, but certainly we won't have time given the other issues that are on our table in a half-day meeting to get into those kinds of details about the structure.

Q. What are the chances do you think as far as maybe moving into a plus-one? What would convince the presidents to do that?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I don't know. You might be better served asking presidents the latter part of that.

Certainly I have said that the model that we've taken forward in the future structure is one that is potentially friendly to that kind of movement, but there are a host of other issues that have been surrounded, I think not the least of which is how would teams fill spots that would feed such a game and what about historical conference relationships to certain Bowl Games. Would that have to be altered in some fashion? Those are not insignificant questions that really go beyond our -- even if the president said we have interest in this, check it out, those would be things to work through.

Q. Do you sense any -- (inaudible) -- on that subject?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Even in my own conference, I told you I would have presidents that would be open to thinking about it and interested in at least exploring it, but that differs greatly by conference.

Q. A few presidents even expressed such dissatisfaction as to say they're embarrassed -- (inaudible). They've said maybe we should just go back to the old

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system. Is that a minority opinion or is that just a reaction to everything that's happened?

KEVIN WEIBERG: I think it is a minority opinion at this point, but remember, the feedback that we get is from a small group of presidents who represent the broader constituency, and I can't pretend to speak for how 117 division 1-A presidents might be thinking about it.

But yeah, there is a sentiment out there, maybe just some fatigue, dealing with these questions on an ongoing basis, and I think there are many that would say -- maybe not many, but there are certainly some that would say if our only alternatives are to move toward extra games, it really would be better to just return to an older system. I don't know how realistic that is, but I've heard some of that talk.

Q. We've heard a lot of talk today about all the different constituents as presidents, networks, et cetera. I'm just wondering, has there been any process of surveying any players and asking them whether they're happy with the system that's in place or would they prefer a playoff?

KEVIN WEIBERG: There has been some actual survey done on a conference-by-conference basis because also we're thinking about 12 regular season football games on an annual basis. That is a legislative proposal that my conference has put forward, so there has been some of that occurring. Not surprisingly, I think you would all suspect this, players like to play games. We've done some surveying around our conference championship game, as well, to get feedback from our players, and players like big games, they like to play.

Now, there is some feedback from players that are worried about the grind of the number of games, the overall number of games, and I think when you start getting past 14 games, there's going to be some concern there, but I think the general feedback from players most of the time, you know, if you're asking do you prefer to play games or not prefer it, they like to play games.

Q. Is there a drop dead date for having something in place?

KEVIN WEIBERG: Well, there is on the standings I think without a doubt. You remember this past season, we really went into the summer before I think we completely resolved where we were going with the formula, and I think that's probably about the drop dead date again. When you start getting into the time when teams are returning to open their respective practices,

obviously we need to have an approach put in place at that point.

Thanks very much.

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