Missouri says board won't comment on Big Ten
BY ALAN SCHER ZAGIER
Associated Press Sports

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - University of Missouri curators appear poised to discuss the school's possible interest in joining an expanded Big Ten Conference. But any inquiring reporters need not bother asking about a move that could trigger a seismic shift in college sports.

The 10-member Board of Curators meets Thursday and Friday in Columbia amid reports of a Friday deadline imposed by the Big 12 for Missouri and Nebraska to affirm their commitment to their current conference. The two schools are among the leading candidates should the Big Ten broaden its membership.

An agenda released Tuesday afternoon says the curators and system president Gary Forsee won't comment on "Big Ten or Big 12 athletics matters" at the sessions.

But the agenda also shows curators will take the unusual step of meeting in a closed session as soon as they arrive on Thursday morning. And they will meet again behind closed doors after Friday's public session, as is customary.

None of the nine curators contacted Tuesday by The Associated Press responded to a request for comment. And a university spokeswoman responded to questions about the meeting as well as whether the school has hired its own consultant to study conference realignment with a three-sentence statement that was previously issued and emphasizes its current conference affiliation.

The Big Ten announced late last year it is considering adding at least one school, and possibly more, to add a league championship game in football and broaden the reach of its cable television network. Its decision has created a ripple throughout the power conferences, causing the Pac-10 to mull its own expansion and threatening the survival of the Big 12, which in addition to Missouri and Nebraska could also lose as many as six schools to a 16-team Pac-10.

Big 12 school presidents and athletic directors concluded a four-day meeting in Kansas City last week with no clear sense - at least publicly - that the 14-year-old league will survive.

Assistant commissioner Bob Burda said Tuesday that the Big 12 is done talking about expansion and conference realignment, for now anyway.
"There will be no further comment from the conference," he told the AP. "We're in a quiet period right now."

In Lincoln, the Nebraska Board of Regents will also meet on Friday, though it's not immediately clear if that governing board will discuss conference affiliation, in public or private.

But public records provided to the AP show that the topic is far from off-limits. In a brief e-mail to Chancellor Harvey Perlman sent on April 20, athletic director Tom Osborne urges his boss to set up a meeting to discuss conference expansion.

Osborne said he requested the meeting after speaking with his friend and colleague, Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel. The Buckeye coach was in Lincoln one day earlier to speak at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet.

----Associated Press sports writer Eric Olson in Omaha, Neb., contributed to this report.

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URL: http://nbcsports.msnbc.com/id/37580798/ns/sports-college_football/
Nebraska's decision on whether to commit long term to the Big 12 or leave for a potential Big Ten invitation could come on Friday, a school told ESPN.com's Andy Katz on Tuesday.

The source said the school is leaning toward the Big Ten, but an invitation hadn't yet been extended, and there was no indication when that would occur. The consensus within the athletic department is that Nebraska wouldn't separate itself from the Big 12 without some assurance that a Big Ten invitation would come, the source said. The Big Ten has set no date for any announcement in the coming weeks, leaving open the possibility that Nebraska could be left in limbo.

Sources at two other Big 12 schools told the Omaha World-Herald that their athletic directors have instructed them to be ready by week's end for a briefing on probable Big 12 changes.

Earlier this week, the Big 12 imposed a deadline of Friday for Nebraska and Missouri to state their intentions on whether they intend to bolt the conference, with the possibility of an extension for a decision by next Tuesday, The Austin American-Statesman reported, citing two sources.

The Big 12's university presidents decided on imposing the ultimatum, two highly placed officials within two of the conference schools said, according to the newspaper.

The Nebraska Board of Regents plans to meet on Friday, though it's not immediately clear if that governing board will discuss conference affiliation, in public or private. But public records provided to the Associated Press show that the topic is far from off limits. In a brief e-mail to Chancellor Harvey Perlman sent on April 20, athletic director Tom Osborne urges his boss to set up a meeting to discuss conference expansion. Osborne said he requested the meeting after speaking with his friend and colleague, Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel. The Buckeyes coach was in Lincoln one day earlier to speak at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet.

On his monthly appearance on the Husker Sports Network Tuesday, Osborne offered confirmation that the timetable on national conference realignment has been accelerated.

"I think before too long -- I don't know exactly what that timeframe is -- we'll be able to put this to bed." Then he jokingly added, "because I'm getting tired of it."

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"There's a lot of information we really don't have right now," Osborne said. "Hopefully we'll get these put together in the next few days.

"Anything I would say regarding Nebraska's position or other schools in the Big 12 would be pure speculation. And I don't think that's very helpful."

University of Missouri curators appear poised to discuss the school's possible interest in joining an expanded Big Ten. But any inquiring reporters need not bother asking about a move that could trigger a seismic shift in college sports.

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Information from ESPN.com's Andy Katz and The Associated Press was used in this report.
Should Missouri answer the ultimatum?

By Dave Matter

Posted June 8, 2010 at 6:27 p.m.

One quick note before we get to Decision 2010: Ultimate Ultimatum!

- The University of Missouri System Board of Curators has released its agenda for its meetings scheduled for Thursday and Friday in Columbia. Nowhere does the agenda mention anything regarding a discussion of conference affiliation, however Thursday's meeting will open with a closed executive board session at the Reynolds Alumni Center.

The agenda reads: "The board of curators will hold an executive session of their meeting … for consideration of certain personnel, property, litigation, audit, contract items and confidential or privileged communications with university counsel, all as authorized by law and upon approval by resolution of the board of curators."

At the conclusion of Friday's meeting, UM System President Gary Forsee and Board Chair Judith Haggard will answer questions from the media, but the released agenda included this statement: "Media should be advised that there will be no comment on Big 10 or Big 12 athletics matters Thursday or Friday."

- Vahe Gregorian of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported on Tuesday that Missouri has been given until June 17 to pledge its loyalty to the Big 12 Conference as the conference realignment saga continues to simmer. Nebraska has reportedly been given the same ultimatum by the conference, and like Missouri, Nebraska’s governing body, the Board of Regents, has a meeting scheduled Friday in Lincoln.

If the other Big 12 members are in fact holding a gun to the Tigers and Huskers, is it even loaded? Would either school be legally obligated to follow up on whatever answer they give the Big 12?
Bob Lattinville is a St. Louis attorney who is considered the state’s authority on matters of sports law. Full disclosure: Lattinville’s firm, Stinson Morrison Hecker, has represented MU and he’s the personal agent for MU assistant coaches Dave Steckel, Barry Odom and strength coach Pat Ivey. But he’s an expert on this topic, so I posed to Lattinville this hypothetical scenario: Is a school legally obligated to whatever answer it gives to the kind of ultimatum the Big 12 is reportedly imposing on MU and Nebraska? In this case, Lattinville said, a school in their position might be best served not answering the league’s demands.

"There’s no sense in putting yourself out there," he said.

Why not?

In legal terms, it’s referred to as promissory estoppel, a legal doctrine that "allows recovery on a promise made without consideration when the reliance on the promise was reasonable, and the promisee relied to his or her detriment," according to Cornell Law School’s online law dictionary.

Essentially, any promise Missouri or Nebraska makes to the Big 12 could be relied upon by the league for other financial purposes and make MU or Nebraska liable for any losses if they back out of a promise.

"In the big picture," Lattinville said, "there’s probably a host of third-party agreements out there, primarily media agreements or other agreements the institution has for licensing and stadium rental and all these other things that are consistent with a conference having so many teams in it and all these other obligations that if they default on based upon reasonable reliance that two schools agree that they’re in, the two schools can be subject not only to the penalty for leaving the conference but also for the economic penalties that result in giving them a false promise.

"So, there is some teeth there."

Legal wrangling could follow either way, but the best advice for MU might be to promise nothing ... even if Texas and other schools use the ultimatum as a reason to bolt the conference themselves.

"You want to be really careful with your answer," Lattinville said. "And I think the response would be, ‘I don’t want to answer unless I absolutely have to … because everyone is trying to consider their options.’ I’d be careful with how I’d fashion my answer, and I’d want to coordinate with the other” school "because there could be some financial consequences in addition to whatever penalty they have in the buyout agreement."

Again, hypothetically speaking, if two schools were facing the same ultimatum, Lattinville said it would be in their best interest to consult before offering an answer to the Big 12. "It makes really good sense," he said. "And I don’t answer unless I have to because my answer is likely to be relied on. And even if it’s unreasonable that" the conference "relied on it, you better believe a lawsuit would follow it or that they’ll threaten a lawsuit recognizing that it’ll take 6-9 months..."
trying to figure this out. And that's going to be a deterrent to another conference picking you up. And if you lose, you could owe exponentially more than what your buyout is."

Of course, all of this could be moot if Missouri and/or Nebraska has a Big Ten offer in their pockets when the Big 12 shows up for its showdown next Thursday.
The Tribune's View

Big 12 Still a mystery

By Henry J. Waters III

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

Everyone wants to know the future of the Big12 Conference. After its recent clambake in Kansas City revealed a whirlwind of rumors and no firm decisions, conjecture remained.

School and conference officials were at bay because none was in a position to say definitively what was going to happen. Premier Tribune football writer Dave Matter did a great job of laying it out in his Sunday coverage, but even the great Matter could do no more than outline options.

One element he could not report was the unspoken but crucial academic ingredient.

Talk in the room was full of football testosterone from athletic directors, defensive maneuvers from Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe and careful non-statements from university chancellors. Without explicitly excluding other factors, football is the big issue for athletic directors, who openly admit one of their main jobs is to make money, of which football generates the most. But lurking offstage is the academic part, which could turn out to be pivotal.

From time to time key players have indicated as much. Big 10 Commissioner Jim Delany seems to have his eye on Missouri. Talk about adding Nebraska also abounds, but I think the Big 10 is particularly interested in Missouri for academic reasons. MU is an AAU institution with one of the most diverse academic and research configurations in the nation. The Big 10 openly admits the non-sports factor is huge.

Looking through the other end of the telescope, Missouri has strong academic reasons to favor a move to the Big 10, which now has 11 members and conceivably could end the speculation by adding only one new school, the one located in Columbia, Mo. If such an invitation arrives in Jesse Hall, the answer will be yes and increased athletic revenue sharing certainly will not be the only reason.

Television contract money and athletic competition in the Big 10 would be great, but at the end of the day academic “fit” might teeter the totter.

HJW III
Mizzou Big 12 loyalty deadline is June 17
By Vahe Gregorian

The University of Missouri has a deadline of June 17 to state its loyalty to the Big 12 and intention to stay in the conference, a source familiar with the matter said Tuesday.

Previous media reports out of Texas have suggested the conference gave MU and Nebraska a deadline of late this week with the possibility of it being extended.

Left unclear is what, if any, tangible ramifications would come with a negative response to the ultimatum. It is not believed, for instance, that the Big 12 has the power or inclination to cast out Mizzou should the school decline to pledge to stay.

The Big 12 and MU officials continue to decline comment on the deadline, apparently made out of the belief that MU and Nebraska both are under consideration to be invited to join the Big Ten.

But with several media reports that the Pac-10 intends to or already has offered Texas and other Big 12 South schools membership – reports that a high-ranking college football official believes to be fundamentally accurate – the possibility exists that refusal by MU and Nebraska to affirm their commitment could lead to those schools further considering the Pac-10 offer.

MU’s board of curators meet on Thursday and Friday in Columbia, but as of early Tuesday afternoon it was not known whether expansion is on the agenda. The curators would have to approve any move to another conference.
JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. -- Voters in Missouri's capital city will decide in November whether to ban smoking in public areas.

The City Council in Jefferson City decided Monday night to put the issue on the ballot after supporters gathered more than 1,200 petition signatures for the ordinance.

The smoking ban would apply to indoor public places, including restaurants, bars, stores and offices. It also would apply to some outdoor areas, such as stadiums and bus stops.

According to the University of Missouri-Columbia, 18 Missouri cities and counties already have adopted ordinances banning smoking in most indoor public places. But Jefferson City is one of just six state capitals that currently does not prohibit smoking.
MU Column bases undergo repairs to fix cracks

By Emily Smoucha
June 9, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The concrete bases of the historic MU Columns are undergoing repairs to fix hairline fractures.

The damages are the result of water getting inside small cracks. When the water freezes inside the cracks, it expands, causing the cracks to get bigger.

"We don't want the hairline fractures to become big cracks," said Karlan Seville, campus facilities communications manager. "We're trying to prevent that."
The cost for the repairs by International Architects Atelier Inc. in Kansas City are estimated at $178,371.

The original bases were replaced in 1949, Seville said in an e-mail, and no significant repairs have taken place since then. The current repairs include putting fiber around the bases and adding a concrete layer to protect the bases from future cracking. The bases will be evaluated every few years to make sure no further repairs are necessary.

The limestone MU Columns themselves are not undergoing any repairs.

"They're really in excellent shape considering their age and the fact that they've been out in the elements all this time," said Peter Millier, director of landscape services and Mizzou Botanic Garden.

In the past, the MU Columns, as well as several buildings on Francis Quadrangle, were covered in ivy. This was originally done to make the campus look more like an ivy league school, Millier said.

The ivy was removed, however, because it damages the structures. Its roots grow into the mortar, where it will continue growing and cracking the mortar. All of the ivy was removed by the end of the 1980s, according to an e-mail from Gary Cox, reference archivist for the University Archives.

The MU Columns were originally part of Academic Hall, which was built between 1840 and 1843. Academic hall burned down on Jan. 9, 1892, in an electrical fire.
MU MENTION PG.3

Special Report: Waiter, there may be a carcinogen in my soup
8:30am EDT; By Ernest Scheyder

DOVER, New Hampshire (Reuters) - Yolande Sprague could be forgiven for feeling virtuous.

Four years ago, just after giving birth to her second child, the stay-at-home mom heard about BPA, a chemical inside some plastics that can leach into water or food slowly over time, potentially causing serious health problems like cancer. Unwilling to take any risks, she ran to Babies "R" Us, which had a program to exchange baby bottles containing BPA, and walked out with $100 in rebates.

If only life were so easy.

What Sprague didn't realize is that BPA, or bisphenol A, is ubiquitous. Simply put, just about anything you eat that comes out of a can -- from Campbell's Chicken Soup and SpaghettiOs to Diet Coke and BumbleBee Tuna -- contains the same exact chemical.

The exposure to BPA from canned food "is far more extensive" than from plastic bottles, said Shanna Swan, a professor and researcher at the University of Rochester in New York. "It's particularly concerning when it's lining infant formula cans."

BPA is the key compound in epoxy resin linings that keep food fresher longer and prevents it from interacting with metal and altering the taste. It has been linked in some studies of rats and mice to not only cancer but also obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Trade groups for chemical and can manufacturers say they stand behind the chemical, and point to some studies from governmental health agencies that deem BPA safe and effective for food contact. They also note that its use has substantially reduced deaths from food poisoning.

But in January, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the first time expressed "some concern" about BPA. Propelled in part by recent independent scientific studies and also bowing to mounting concern from the public and consumer groups, the agency announced that it would tap $30 million in federal stimulus funds to study the chemical's potential effects on the human body.

Though it is not clear how economically stimulating the study will be, its results are anxiously awaited in industry and consumer circles. The report, due late in 2011, is being done in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health.

"BPA has not been found or been proven to harm either children or adults, but because children ... in the very early stages of development are exposed to BPA, the data that we're getting deserves a much closer look," Deputy Health and Human Services Secretary Bill Corr said earlier this year.
What is clear, however, is that unlike the case with plastic, there are no economically viable alternatives to the chemical in epoxy resins right now.

"If it's in baby bottles, then I can imagine it's in a lot of other things," said Sprague, who has a history of premature deliveries, but is due to give birth to a boy in September. "Everybody gets breast cancer now. It's scary. Is it because of BPA? I don't know."

BPA VERSUS DNA

One scientist helping to lead the charge against BPA is Yale University physician, professor and researcher Hugh Taylor. His research has shown that the chemical alters the way genes react to estrogen, and could open the door for infants in utero to develop cancer much later in life.

"I tell my pregnant patients to avoid products containing it," he said. "Even a fleeting exposure in pregnancy can cause lasting damage."

The studies by Taylor are certainly eye-opening. They have shown that the chemical alters the way DNA operates, a process known as an epigenetic change.

On each strand of DNA a group of carbon molecules binds to receptors that help turn genes on or off. In the presence of BPA, though, many of those carbon molecules can be removed from DNA, and with them the switch.

Think of the carbon groups as a kind of lock, and the DNA receptors as a gate. When the lock is removed, the gate can swing open, greatly increasing the risk for estrogen to flow through later in life, interact with DNA and cause cancer.

"It has permanent, lasting effects," said Taylor, donning a white coat in his New Haven, Connecticut, lab surrounded by beakers, microscopes, pipettes and other tools of the scientist's trade. "The adult exposure is concerning, but I think the fetal exposure is worse."

To study the way BPA may affect children in utero, Taylor injected pregnant mice with high doses of the chemical five days into their 21-day gestation cycle. He found that the mice exposed to BPA in the womb lacked the "gate" on their DNA receptors and were more susceptible to estrogen for the rest of their lives.

Since many foods contain natural estrogen -- soy, for instance -- Taylor believes his studies suggest complications could arise down the road simply from eating basic foods, never mind estrogen supplements that many women take as they enter menopause. "In the mouse models, they're more prone to cancer," Taylor said.

As a gynecologist, Taylor studied the effects primarily on female mice. The long-term impact of increased BPA on DNA receptors in males, he said, remains unknown. His research is also limited because he can't test BPA on unaffected humans. "We all have it in our bodies, so there's no way to test a population without it," he said. "You'll never have the perfect experiment in humans to prove this."

Right now Taylor is studying just how BPA removes the carbon groups from DNA -- in effect the specific process that removes the "lock" -- and hopes this will shed further light on how the chemical interacts with the body.
He acknowledges BPA's role in food safety but says people should be made aware of the potential danger. "We always balance the risk with the benefits in our lives," he said. "There's a price we pay for modern society and convenience."

**Frederick vom Saal, a professor at the University of Missouri who is studying BPA** independently from Taylor, is far less diplomatic. Known as an aggressive crusader against the chemical, he said that if BPA were treated as a drug, "it would have been pulled immediately" by regulators.

**A EUREKA MOMENT**

Inside canned food, the thin layer of epoxy resin sits between the food and metal can, helping to keep the two from interacting and preventing rust.

The resin is sprayed into the can and dries almost instantly. Thousands of companies, such as Campbell Soup Co and Coca-Cola, use it to line their cans. Without it, food would perish far faster. Cans lacking the chemical would explode on store shelves when contents reacted with the metal.

First synthesized in 1891, BPA is a commercial hardener, making it great to use in a wide variety of applications, ranging from plastic canoes to headlights to cash register receipts. As a key building block for epoxy resin, it acts as part of the compound's polymer base, and was first used in the 1940s in canned foods.

A breakthrough product in its day, it has also been enduring. "There's just something about it," said Steve Russell, the head of the plastics division for the American Chemistry Council, an industry trade group. "When they figured it out, it was one of those 'eureka' moments."

Because BPA has been presumed to be safe without question for so long, very little research has been undertaken to find commercially viable substitutes in canned goods. "At the moment, there is no single epoxy resin which provides the same degree of food safety, shelf stability and cost-effectiveness for maintaining the shelf life of fruits and vegetables," said Russell.

That was not the case with plastic bottles. In that industry, replacements have been much easier to come by. Alternatives to plastic with BPA include polyethylene, most commonly used to make shopping bags, and polypropylene, which makes water bottles squeezable.

To be sure, non-BPA-based resins exist, but they are much more expensive. That's a challenge for an industry that is sensitive about price differences to the fraction of a penny. story continues
LETTER: Pi Beta Phi deserves kudos for generous donations

By Randy Hodill
June 8, 2010 | 3:41 p.m. CDT

Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC) of Columbia would like to publicly thank the Pi Beta Phi house at MU for its generous May 22 gift of the beds, dressers, desks and chairs previously used by the women of the house.

Our volunteers have already begun to distribute these items to needy families. Because of Pi Beta Phi’s generosity, many children will have decent places to store clothes, do their school work and most importantly get a good night’s sleep.

We appreciate Pi Beta Phi for its community spirit and willingness to work with Love INC to serve those in need.

We invite other campus residential organizations to participate in community service projects with Love INC. We would be happy to give presentations or meet with any individuals interested.

Randy Hodill is executive director of Love INC.