MU sees nothing to apologize about

By MIKE DeARMOND

COLUMBIA | No one at Missouri — from MU system president Gary Forsee to chancellor Brady Deaton to athletic director Mike Alden to Gov. Jay Nixon — sees a need to apologize for anything. From exploring opportunities that ultimately were never offered in the Big Ten to the decision to stay in the Big 12 for the promise of more money.

“If we had something to apologize for, we might,” Deaton told The Star after a 44-minute news conference alongside Forsee and Alden on Tuesday in the Clinton Club at Mizzou Arena. “But we’ve reflected on every step along the way. And said, ‘Could we have done different at anytime to improve upon the situation that we are now in, which we feel is a very good situation?’

“And the answer to that is no.”

Where Missouri is at is in a 10-team Big 12 that MU officials believe will be receiving increased revenues from varying sources, including future TV agreements. The pie will now be cut and served among two fewer teams because of Colorado’s decision to depart for the Pacific-10 and Nebraska’s to join the Big Ten.

Although no Missouri official would attach a specific dollar figure to anticipated revenue projections, Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe said there were prospects of the conference in the range of the highest paying leagues — the Southeastern and Big Ten — which distribute $17 million to $20 million to their members.

Yes, revenue sharing in the Big 12 will remain unevenly distributed, with most of the variances resulting from television and NCAA Tournament appearances for individual teams. However, Deaton said: “Revenue projections … have the potential to become the second highest in the nation and will enable us to sustain and build a stronger athletic program.”

None of the MU officials would provide an answer to repeated questions about whether they felt misled by the Big Ten and commissioner Jim Delany. Missouri was at the forefront of most speculation regarding expansion targets after the Big Ten announced in December that it was studying possible expansion.

Forsee and Deaton each said that at no time, including when Missouri committed fully to returning to the Big 12 late last week, did MU have an offer to join the Big Ten.
However, Deaton admitted that early on, “While we were committed to the Big 12 we were certainly open to analyzing what might be best for us as an institution. We owe that to our institution and the fans.”

That drew criticism from Nebraska, whose president maintained that Nebraska approached the Big Ten only because it was concerned about Missouri leaving the Big 12. Even in the midst of Missouri and the nine other remaining schools in the Big 12 hammering out a “gentleman’s agreement” to remain in the Big 12, Oklahoma State booster T. Boone Pickens said in a video by the Austin American-Statesman that “I don’t care about Missouri.” (Go to KansasCity.com and then the Campus Corner blog to see the video.)

Early in the day in Kansas City, Nixon took issue with criticism that he hurt the chances for MU to receive a Big Ten offer by saying Northwestern and Wisconsin of the Big Ten were academically superior to Texas Tech and Oklahoma State of the Big 12.

“We all appreciate the Tigers and the asset that they are,” Nixon said before addressing the Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce gathering at the KCI Expo Center. “I’m a sports fan, always have been. I’m going to speak up for my state and its teams when I can.”

At the Northland meeting, Jason Grill, state representative for Missouri’s 32nd district, reacted as a fan and in terms of his associations with MU officials, including the athletic direction that Grill referred to as “Mr. Alden.”

“I thought it was a sure thing,” Grill said of an anticipated Big Ten invitation.

“Personally, I was kind of a fan of moving to the Big Ten. But the way things kind of went down, I think we probably made the right decision to stay in the Big 12.”

That was the message Alden, Deaton and Forsee repeated over and over later in the day in Columbia. Forsee said the anticipated added revenue would create a rising financial “tide that will lift all boats.”

Inescapable was the fact that Missouri — after complaining about uneven revenue distribution in the Big 12 — ultimately settled for more of the same.

“It comes back on Mizzou,” Alden said. “It’s incumbent on us to win more games and to get more exposure on TV for games. It’s something we understand, that we’ve accepted.”
TOPEKA, Kan. — Top Kansas officials Tuesday celebrated the survival of the Big 12 Conference, even if it came with significant concessions to universities in Texas and Oklahoma.

Gov. Mark Parkinson called the renewed life for the league with 10 members "great news" for the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, their athletes and fans. U.S. Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts said the regional economy would be bolstered.

Kansas and Kansas State officials saw keeping the conference together as their best option after Colorado and Nebraska announced last week that they'd leave by 2012. Five schools in Texas and Oklahoma also seemed ready to bolt as well.

They didn't, of course. The University of Texas can move forward with a plan for its own television network, without sharing the revenues. Also, Kansas, Kansas State and three other schools agreed to give up one-time cash payments, Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe told reporters.

State officials weren't talking much Tuesday about those concessions, referring questions to the Big 12 or saying details might take weeks to work out. Several said Kansas and Kansas State are likely to do significantly better financially in a slimmer Big 12 even with the concessions than they would be searching for new leagues.

"You're weighing your costs and your gains," said former Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer, vice chairman of the Kansas Board of Regents, which oversees both Kansas and Kansas State.

He added: "One thing we know is that being in a premier conference is not only important financially for the athletic programs, but it really has a lot to do with the recruitment of students, maintaining strong support from alums and donors."

Officials with the conference and its remaining member universities said promises of more lucrative television contracts saved the Big 12.

"In fact, we are in a better position than ever before," Parkinson said in a statement.

Kansas chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little and athletics director Lew Perkins said they're excited about the future of the smaller conference, believing it offers "long-term strength and vitality."
And Kansas State men's basketball coach Frank Martin said: "At the end of the day, I thought common sense would prevail and everyone would understand how important all our partners are to our existence."

The Big 12 expects Colorado and Nebraska to pay millions of dollars in penalties for leaving, and the money normally would be split among the remaining conference members.

But the two Kansas schools, the University of Missouri, Iowa State and Baylor agreed to forgo their payments, with their shares split among Texas, Texas A&M University and the University of Oklahoma.

Big 12 officials didn't have any figures for how much the five schools would give up.

The concession didn't bother Kansas House Speaker Mike O'Neal, an ardent Kansas fan who was allowed to temporarily display the school's 2008 men's basketball championship trophy in his Statehouse office last year.

"It's all about the money in the first place," O'Neal said. "Keeping them in the conference also has a value to it. At some point, it's a matter of, What it's going to take to keep you in the conference?"

Kansas officials didn't like the uncertainty that the collapse of the Big 12 would have brought. They wouldn't speculate about what would happen, but their worst-case scenarios included Kansas and Kansas State landing in less prestigious — or even separate — conferences.

"I think there's been a collective sigh of relief in Kansas," said Board of Regents chairwoman Jill Docking. "The conference that we supported and supported consistently is staying together."

AP Sports Writer Doug Tucker in Kansas City, Mo., contributed to this report.

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Missouri AD says he probably would have done things differently
By Vahe Gregorian
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
Wednesday, Jun. 16 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. — If he had it to do again, University of Missouri athletics director Mike Alden probably would have refuted speculation over the prospect of Mizzou's willingness to join the Big Ten Conference rather than allowing the perception that something may be in the works. That's part of the dynamic that contributed to destabilizing the Big 12 and left MU coaches and fans squirming as the conference stared at oblivion.

"By us not coming out and reinforcing the message that we have not received an offer from the Big Ten or that we needed to focus only on what we're doing in the Big 12, certainly I can understand how that would fuel the desires and the angst of our fans," Alden said after a news conference Tuesday.

Not to mention Big 12 brethren, which MU could have soothed as recently as the Big 12 meetings two weeks ago in Kansas City.

"I think by not coming out firmly at that time, as other schools didn't as well, I think that just continued to fuel the speculation," said Alden, who went as far as to acknowledge the posture was a mistake before adding a caveat. "Yeah, I do. I think that's part of the thing. ... I don't know if it's necessarily a mistake. Maybe it is. But it's just the unfortunate thing that happens in these type deals."

Left unsaid is that MU's reasoning logically must have been based at least partly on the hopes for an offer that never came. And MU nearly was left without an obvious — or desirable — conference home.

But when Texas on Monday declined an offer from the Pacific 10, persuaded by evidence of a major television contract upgrade ahead for the Big 12 and the freedom to launch its own network, the Big 12 remained viable, if not intact.

Other key forces such as Oklahoma, which was bent all along on saving the Big 12 despite also having an offer from the Pac-10 as well as perhaps other options, chimed in promptly to pave the way to a new era in a conference that has had previous configurations of six, seven and eight and will stand at 10 after Colorado and Nebraska eventually leave.
Thus ended, for the time being anyway, what Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe called plenty of excitement "about trying to see where the hearses are going."

Instead, the conference will hit the re-set button with no immediate plans to replace Nebraska and/or Colorado and will offer a change in competitive tone that includes a football schedule in which all conference members will meet annually, no championship game and a full round-robin in men's basketball.

The new setup also could provide a valuable symbolic designation.

"I think the quicker we can work away from 'North' and 'South' (divisions) and just say, 'We're the Big 12 Conference, it doesn't matter where we all are,' the better," Alden said.

THE NEW BIG 12

Spearheaded by perennial powers Texas and Oklahoma, the league should remain an annual factor in the football national title race and men's basketball only should grow by the pruning of its two weakest limbs.

The revised competitive system could start as soon as 2011 if Colorado and Nebraska are able to leave after this year as each is seeking to do. Moreover, as bowl payments, basketball revenues and television contract "escalators" go up as already in place, Alden said, revenue automatically is going up for all — and now with only 10 mouths to feed instead of 12.

That's not including expectations for new TV deals, which a source said could put Texas, Oklahoma and Texas A&M revenue distributions in the $20-25 million range annually and reap around $15 million for other conference schools.

Without addressing specific numbers, MU chancellor Brady Deaton said projections indicated the Big 12 could earn the second-most money among the nation's leagues. Beebe also declined to go into specifics, citing negotiating strategy.

There also remained ambiguity over whether there was a new tier system on the horizon or if the Big 12 would stick with the same staggered system of payments that schools receive that it's used and led to grumbling by Mizzou and others.

Alden and MU president Gary Forsee said the tier system was not in play but a source familiar with the concept said it was and several other media outlets have reported the same.

Whatever the precise outcome, Forsee said, "The rising tide will lift all boats" and suggested MU should explore its own network. And Alden offered a new perspective on the revenue distribution based largely on television appearances.
"We understand that, we accept that and we'll move forward with that," he said, adding, "Then that onus comes back on Mizzou. It's incumbent upon us to win more games to get more exposure on TV."

He later mentioned "scheduling up" in football, although also noting it's still crucial for MU to have at least six home games and that having nine conference games will factor in MU's thinking as well.

Also remaining unclear is the question of distribution of exit penalties from Nebraska and Colorado, a figure still being sorted out.

MU officials said there was no accuracy to the belief that MU and the four other schools that had no known offers to leave were willing to give up their share of that to the schools that had offers.

But Beebe indicated that offer had been made, and Big 12 spokesman Bob Burda said in an e-mail: "The five agreed that if necessary, they would use a portion of their shares of the money Colorado and Nebraska will owe for leaving the Big 12 to ensure a certain level of revenue distribution."

Whatever the ultimate outcome of that, what Burda called a "good-faith" gesture was the term of the day.

A GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT

The once-contentious 10 for the moment are bound together only by what most accurately can be called a gentleman's agreement — albeit one apparently reinforced by unspecified harsher penalties for early withdrawal.

At Mizzou, that was affirmed by a change in language from the mechanical "proud members of the Big 12" mantra it had been using to the term "commitment" used repeatedly by Deaton, who noted the schools staying "shifts the national dialogue a little bit about the 16-(team) megaconferences."

And now there was no hedging about pledging to keep it that way.

"We're committed to this for the long haul," Deaton said, "and we're not anticipating any discussions with other conferences."

While Beebe acknowledged there are bruises to be healed within the conference, he said he the Big 12 was "honored to have (MU) commit to go forward" and believed the school now understands how much value the conference has — and that the conference itself has "even a higher level of understanding of how much we need each other."
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The Big 12 now dealing with the details

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

The Big 12 started to renew its vows Tuesday and iron out some details in the process.

Future revenue distribution became a topic when The Star learned that the five schools facing uncertain futures — Kansas, Missouri, Kansas State, Iowa State and Baylor — made an offer to use their shares of penalty money to ensure a certain level of revenue distribution to Texas, Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

The penalty money — which would be revenue withheld from distribution to departing members Colorado and Nebraska over the next two years — could total $35 million to $40 million, according to a source.

The money could be used to bring the Longhorns, Sooners and Aggies, who had interest from more than one other conference, to a distribution level comparable to what they would have received by jumping to another conference. The estimated payout to a member of an expanded Pacific-10 was around $20 million.

The three Big 12 powerbrokers would use this fund to reach that amount, but according to a source close to the Big 12, the revenue projections from future media rights could make the fund unnecessary.

Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton and athletic director Mike Alden said they don't believe that any school would fall short of revenue projections. But if that happened, they maintain that any payment from the penalty fund to the three or any other school would require a vote of the Big 12 board of directors.

Alden said it would then be up to the league to “distribute that money accordingly.”

Texas president Bill Powers said Tuesday that the Longhorns don’t expect to draw from the fund.

“There have been reports that there’s going to be a special deal for some of us using penalty money or other money to guarantee Texas and possibly other schools a particular value,” Powers said. “We have heard about that. We’re not part of it.”
The conference's regular revenue-sharing formula, which gives more money to teams with TV and NCAA Tournament appearances, won't change. This year, schools divvied up $139 million, and the amounts per school range from about $8 million to $12 million.

Also on Tuesday, Texas Tech became the last of the 10 remaining schools to chime in. The university issued a statement saying it was "recommitting our status as a member of the Big 12."

No television deal was announced Tuesday, but Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe said prospects of bringing his conference into range of the highest paying leagues — the Big Ten and Southeastern Conference — was a game-changing moment that helped convince Texas and other schools not to accept an offer to join the Pac-10. Or, in the case of Texas A&M, pursue SEC membership.

"Based on analysis with our consultants and media companies we are in tremendous position to execute future agreements that will put our member institutions on par with any in the country," Beebe said.

The Big 12 continues to operate under contract with ABC/ESPN through 2015-16. Its football games on cable will continue on Fox Sports Net through 2011-12, but the conference can begin renegotiating that deal next April.

The Big Ten is expected to pay its members about $20 million annually. The SEC announced last week that its members will receive $17.3 million this year.

Beebe said the Big 12 won't be hurt financially by the departures of Nebraska to the Big Ten for the 2011 football season and Colorado to the Pac-10 for the 2012 season.

"We worked hard without our current partners to get a commitment that our current rights fees wouldn't be diminished and that was extremely helpful," Beebe said.

The prospect of schools starting their own televisions networks was critical to the process. Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds said his school has been planning a network, mostly for exposure of its non-revenue sports, for more than two years.

On Tuesday, Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione said his school will start its own network.

Money may not be the only adhesive for the Big 12 as it prepares for a 10-team future. Oklahoma State athletic director Mike Holder said he'd like to see stronger penalties for teams that leave.

"I would support that," he said.

Other issues to work out are competitive. The Big 12 hadn't decided whether to conduct a football championship game. It would have to seek a change in NCAA bylaws to allow a title game as a league with fewer than 12 members.
But if the Big 12 goes to nine conference games as expected, Beebe said the conference is prepared to scrap the title game that has determined the conference championship since 1996.

"It makes access to the BCS national championship game and having two teams in BCS bowls easier for us," Beebe said.

Beebe said the conference wasn’t seeking to replace Colorado and Nebraska.

"The indications I get is with 10 members we have a sufficient number and there is no interest to expand further," he said.
Missouri governor won't apologize for MU advocacy

By MIKE DEARMOND

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon stands behind his early advocacy of the University of Missouri considering a move from the Big 12 Conference to the Big Ten Conference, despite criticism that he hurt the chances for MU to receive an offer that never came.

“Speaking out and saying that we should be listening has yielded for us a better situation than how we walked into this,” Nixon said before addressing the Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce gathering at the KCI Expo Center on Tuesday.

“We all appreciate the Tigers and the asset that they are,” Nixon said. “I’m a sports fan, always have been. I’m going to speak up for my state and its teams when I can.”

Nixon did more than stand up for Missouri. In praising the academic standing of several Big Ten schools, he implied that Big 12 schools Texas Tech and Oklahoma State were not of that caliber.

Nebraska president Harvey Perlman, upon the Big Ten picking Nebraska instead of Missouri, criticized Nixon’s words and actions.

Although Missouri officials anticipated an offer to apply for membership to the Big Ten, that offer never came. Asked if University of Missouri officials were misled by the Big Ten, Nixon did not provide a direct answer.

“Our administrative team did a good, solid job,” Nixon said, “and kept a cool head around them during this process.

“As we stand here today, a newly configured (10-member Big 12) conference has Missouri as one of its leaders. The dollars of that will also certainly be more than we were getting.”

Nixon also thought that losing Nebraska and Colorado would actually improve the quality of basketball in the Big 12.

“Go play Texas twice a year, and whatnot, beat Kansas twice a year, all of those things will be good to do,” Nixon said. “But it also I think will raise the RPI of the conference. When you drop
off a Nebraska and a Colorado, which traditionally have not been as strong in those sports, then I think that gives us an advantage there, too.”

Nixon, in an earlier appearance in Columbia, stated his position on that a bit more strongly, calling Colorado and Nebraska “the two weakest basketball programs” in the Big 12.

Their departure, Nixon said, would create “a more competitive basketball schedule which will guarantee more teams have a better shot to make the NCAA Tournament . . . and to have a football situation where you get a stronger game.

“I think it's a very good place for our Tigers to land.”

At the Northland meeting, Jason Grill, state representative for the 32nd Missouri district in Kansas City's Northland, reacted as a fan and in terms of his associations with MU officials.

“I thought it was a sure thing,” Grill said of an anticipated Big Ten invitation. “I think if they would have expanded to 16, I think we probably would have got an offer.”

But could Missouri have held out and not committed to the reformed Big 12 and waited longer on the Big Ten?

“Personally, I was kind of a fan of moving to the Big Ten,” Grill said. “But the way things kind of went down, I think we probably made the right decision to stay in the Big 12.”
Missouri governor Nixon takes shot at basketball programs of Colorado, Nebraska

Politics and college athletics make strange bedfellows, it seems. Missouri governor Jay Nixon now is talking about the strength of the new-look Big 12 after publicly saying last December the University of Missouri should consider the Big Ten.

Nixon on Tuesday said the remaining Big 12 schools are in better position to make the NCAA tournament because the conference lost its "the two weakest basketball programs" when Colorado and Nebraska left.

He added that the poor records and weaker schedules of the Buffaloes and Cornhuskers were dragging down the rankings of other Big 12 schools.
Missouri officials talk Big 12

By Dave Matter

Posted June 15, 2010 at 6:36 p.m.

Here are some of the highlights from Tuesday's news conference at Mizzou Arena featuring Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden, Chancellor Brady Deaton and UM System President Gary Forsee. We'll have much more coverage in Wednesday's Tribune:

- First things first, Deaton stated the Big Ten never extended an offer for Missouri to join its conference. MU officials explored the possibility and studied the numbers, Deaton said, but an offer never arrived. Later, Alden tried to trace the origin of the Big Ten speculation, which of course started when MU officials didn’t initially deny MU’s interest in changing conferences. Alden admitted as much and agreed it might have been the wrong approach.

"When this all started to bubble in December, I think our fans developed a thought that and an expectation that the Big Ten was a league that was going to invite Mizzou," he said. ‘By us not coming out and reinforcing that message that we have not received an offer from the Big Ten or that we needed to only focus what we were doing in the Big 12, certainly I can understand how that fueled the desires and the angst of our fans. For those out there who thought about that, the reality is we did not receive an offer from the Big Ten Conference. When we heard about conference expansions, we did our due diligence and did all the things necessary to make sure we were moving forward ... but at the end of the day the Big 12 Conference is where we’ve been and ... where we continue to be.’"

“The speculation out there needed to be talked about and needed to be directly refuted,” he added. “What happens with your fan base, and I understand this, they’re sitting around going, ‘Maybe, maybe.’ Then at the end it’s like, ‘Holy cow, what’s going on?’ That’s an unfortunate occurrence.”

- Alden’s and Deaton’s thoughts seemed to conflict with Commissioner Dan Beebe’s regarding the league revenue that will be withheld from Nebraska and Colorado ... and, according to Beebe earlier in the day, conceded to Texas, Texas A&M and Oklahoma by the five schools who
weren’t being pursued by other conferences: Baylor, Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State and Missouri. All three MU officials seemed to be finessing non-answers to the question of whether the five schools agreed to concede those funds to the other three.

“Our understanding on that was ... there were institutions in our league that had opportunities to go elsewhere,” Alden said, "and doing that, mostly likely — you’d have to ask Dan about that — there were opportunities for them to perhaps generate more revenue share than they’re currently getting. So we wanted to make sure that wasn’t necessarily an issue for them. If there was a way we could assist, we were more than happy to be able to assist in that fashion with the league. But, again, in our projections it’s going to be a moot point. It’s not going to be necessary but we were willing to do that.” I’ll explore that topic more in Wednesday’s Tribune.

**UPDATE, 7 p.m.:** In an email to the Tribune, Big 12 Assistant Commissioner for Communications Bob Burda shed some light on the exit revenue question:

"The five schools that were facing uncertain conference futures - Kansas, Kansas State, Missouri, Iowa State and Baylor - made a good-faith offer to Texas, Oklahoma and Texas A&M. The five agreed that if necessary, they would use a portion of their shares of the money Colorado and Nebraska will owe for leaving the Big 12 to ensure a certain level of revenue distribution. Contrary to some reports, use of this revenue from those five institutions does not affect the revenue distribution formula or the amounts that would be distributed to the other institutions. All withdrawal fees withheld from Colorado and Nebraska will be shared by the 10 remaining members in accordance with the conference's revenue distribution policy."

- There will be no changes to the revenue distribution model the Big 12 has been using for TV revenue, Alden said. “And that puts the onus on Mizzou to win more games,” Alden added. More important than winning games is scheduling attractive ones, and I can’t imagine a new conference schedule that will include Oklahoma and Texas every year will inspire Alden and Gary Pinkel to strengthen the nonconference slate. In fact, I’d be surprised if MU doesn’t go straight cupcake on the three noncon games. Arizona State better have a fat buyout in its two-year deal, especially if the nine-game Big 12 schedule goes into effect in 2011.

- Alden reiterated the point made earlier in the day at Texas and by Beebe that there is no new finalized television agreement, but the league has assured the remaining 10 schools that consultants project a new deal that will be more lucrative than the current agreements, with the potential to be the second-highest revenue generating league in the country, Deaton said.

- There will be no changes to the way the Big 12 bowls select their Big 12 participants, Alden said.

- Some of the North Division ADs met in Kansas City on Tuesday and they discussed conference scheduling issues, non-conference scheduling, exit fees and eliminating the North-South divisions. That's a distinction Alden is in favor of erasing. "The quicker we can get away from the North and South divisions, to say, 'We're the Big 12 Conference, it doesn't matter where
we're at,' the better. I think this will help facilitate that. ... We choose to believe the league will be stronger."

- Alden does not expect the conference's name to change. "Big 12. Big 12," he said. "It's a great brand and we're going to keep moving with that."

- I asked Alden that if the future of the Big 12 is so promising, does he believe Nebraska or Colorado will regret leaving? "I don't know," he said. "Those two institutions made decisions that they felt were in their best interest. To us, we think the Big 12 is clearly one of the strongest leagues in the country. They were valued members. Will they regret not being here? I don't know. I have tremendous respect for Coach Osborne. Tremendous respect for him. ... We think the Big 12 is as strong as there is in the country and we're just proud to be a part of it."
Four frenzied days saved the Big 12 from demise

By J. BRADY McCOLLOUGH

Monday would not be a day for distractions. Big 12 Conference Commissioner Dan Beebe made sure of that.

Beebe, several of his staff members and the league’s television consultants checked into Room 516 of the Hyatt Regency Dallas-Fort Worth a little before 8 a.m. with renewed hope. The Big 12, pronounced dead at age 14 by many on Friday afternoon, suddenly had a pulse.

Coming off a long and sleepless weekend, Beebe and his crew would need all of their focus to handle the upcoming conversations that would make or break the Big 12, which was down to 10 teams after losing Colorado to the Pacific 10 and Nebraska to the Big Ten.

Negotiations with the remaining schools would be tense, but, considering how Beebe viewed the situation 72 hours earlier, he was feeling pretty optimistic.

“Heading into the weekend, he thought he was in the fourth quarter, down 21,” a source close to Beebe said. “But he was going to play to the final gun.”

In that little hotel room, Beebe would later celebrate his finest hour and what some would call a miracle: Pac-10 Commissioner Larry Scott had returned to California from his weekend fishing trip in Oklahoma and Texas without one catch, and the Big 12 was saved.

How it happened — how the University of Texas went from driving the cattle out west to saying “hold your horses,” and how the Big 12 went from revenue-deprived to rich in its television contracts, all in a matter of hours — is a story that will color the perceptions of the league and its members for years to come.

The enormity of it was enough for Beebe to give a nod to a higher power after his work at the Hyatt was done about 7 p.m. Monday.
Nebraska Athletic Director Tom Osborne was unapologetic on Friday afternoon in Lincoln as he explained the decision that sent the college sports world into full-fledged panic mode.

Big Red was headed to the Big Ten, and he wanted everyone to know that it was not one team or two teams that broke up a conference but six teams — a not-so-veiled shot at Texas, which was rumored to be leading an exodus of five more Big 12 teams to join Colorado in the Pac-10. But wait. Hadn’t the Longhorns made it clear that they would consider staying in the Big 12 if Nebraska stayed?

According to Texas sports website Orangebloods.com, Longhorns Athletic Director DeLoss Dodds and President William Powers had gathered up their coaches on Wednesday when Nebraska’s intention to leave the Big 12 first broke and told them their attempts to save the league were unsuccessful.

“At that point, there’s not a doubt in my mind that Texas was going to the Pac-10,” said Orangebloods reporter Chip Brown. “William Powers, who is a Cal graduate, had secured votes on the regents board that the Pac-16 was the way to go.

“They really felt like Nebraska was a trusted ally. ... They didn’t feel they had as good a relationship with the other Big 12 North schools.”

Nebraska’s exodus set into motion a chain reaction to Big 12 Armageddon.

Missouri, which also was expecting an invitation from the Big Ten, thought it had an exit. But conference commissioner Jim Delany said he was putting expansion on pause after adding Nebraska.

In Columbia, where the MU Board of Curators met, an uneasy feeling set in that the Tigers might get left behind. MU officials reached out to Delany for what a source said was “a lifeline.”

The invitation didn’t come, putting Missouri alongside Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State and Baylor as Big 12 schools that suddenly looked like they were headed to the bread lines.

That night, hundreds of miles away in California, Larry Scott was preparing to make their worst fears come true.

The plane carrying the Pac-10 contingent left Concord, Calif., at 7:30 Saturday morning, headed for Oklahoma City. Awaiting them were officials from Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, which were ready to migrate west, along with Texas, Texas Tech and Texas A&M.

By all accounts, this was a formality, the ultimate victory tour for Scott, the former CEO of the Women’s Tennis Association who had just taken over the conference in March.

As Scott’s plane touched down early Saturday afternoon, athletic directors, presidents and chancellors from the Forgotten Five had spoken on a teleconference. Those schools, as a bid to keep Texas and the others in the Big 12, would eventually agree to forfeit their share of the
buyout paid by Colorado and Nebraska for leaving — a total a source said could reach $35
million to $40 million.

Beebe had no doubt where the remaining North schools plus Baylor stood. They wanted the
conference to survive with 10 teams. Beebe spent all day on the phone with officials from the
supposedly Pac-10 bound schools, trying to sell them on the same points he made in Kansas City
two weeks before at the Big 12 meetings: the Pac-10’s revenue distribution was less equal than
the Big 12’s and the Pac-10’s student-athlete and fan experience did not compare with that of the
passion-fueled Big 12.

Beebe could talk all he wanted on Saturday, but his league was breaking apart. While Scott met
with Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, Southeastern Conference commissioner Mike Slive was
visiting Texas A&M. Orangebloods reported that the Aggies were strongly considering joining
the SEC and that six of nine A&M regents were leaning in that direction.

The link between A&M and the SEC was news to Texas, which assumed the Aggies were on
board with the Pac-10, according to Brown. As Texas’ baseball team played TCU in a NCAA
super regional game on Saturday night, TV cameras caught Powers, Dodds and Texas football
coach Mack Brown sitting together in a club box, deep in conversation. It can only be assumed
that baseball was not the topic.

Dan Beebe did not rest on Sunday, and neither did Larry Scott. Beebe was on the phone and said
the same lines so often it felt like a broken record: This is what we can do. Does it make you feel
more comfortable?

These phrases were delivered most often to Texas officials, who came back to the negotiating
table with the intention of making a good-faith effort to save the Big 12 — this while knowing
that they were to meet with Scott on Sunday as well.

Beebe’s pitch suddenly was taking hold. A source close to the negotiations told The Star on
Sunday that chances of the Big 12 staying together were “significantly greater than 24 hours
ago.”

There are numerous theories as to why the Longhorns began to have a change of heart, and most
of them involve money. The New York Times reported that Texas asked Scott for the ability to
have its own cable TV network in addition to the network Scott was planning for the 16-team
Pac-10 and that Scott told Texas no, which served as a deal-breaker.

Brown read the situation differently. He said Texas did not want to go to the Pac-10 without
longtime rival A&M.

“That’s why they did an about-face,” Brown said. “They did not want to be the reason that Texas
and Texas A&M came apart.”
Texas would have been considered the instigator because its board of regents was scheduled to vote on the Pac-10 on Tuesday. A&M's regents would have met to vote on the SEC after that meeting.

With Texas willing to listen, Beebe had his chance, and he had more to offer than he did back in Kansas City. Beebe secured a commitment from ESPN/ABC that it would not alter its current agreement with the Big 12, even though the league had lost two teams and its football championship game. That meant more for everybody.

Beebe also got a commitment from Fox Sports Net, which will negotiate a new TV deal with the league in 2012, that predicted a dramatic rise in revenue for all members. Texas and other schools were also free to pursue their own networks.

He had one final nugget to sell. Texas, Texas A&M and Oklahoma could dip into a reserve fund — made up of the buyout money forfeited by the remaining five schools — if their revenues from the Big 12's new TV deal were ever short of the $20 million a year promised by the Pac-10.

Meanwhile, Scott had made his pitch in Lubbock, College Station and, eventually, Austin. A source close to the Pac-10 negotiations told The Star that Scott, after his meeting with Texas, thought the Longhorns were about to join his conference. The pillaging of a proud league appeared to be close to complete.

When Beebe arrived Monday morning at the Hyatt, he could sense that his conference was off life support for the moment. But he also knew it hadn't survived anything. At the very least, it was going to be another trying day.

What more could Beebe do to convince Texas it didn't need to go anywhere? He had given the school its chance to have its own cable TV network, guaranteed that it would make at least as much as the Pac-10 was offering in revenue sharing and gave it a chance to maintain old rivalries and traditions. Still, Texas had to sleep on it.

When Texas officials awoke, they were ready to dance with Beebe. Powers was swayed most by the possibility of a cable TV network for his university, and by 9 a.m., Orangebloods was reporting that Texas was angling to stay put.

Later in the day, ESPN said four sources had told the network that a departure of the Big 12 schools to the Pac-10 was "imminent." Brown stood by his report, ESPN backed off and Texas would make an official announcement Monday. Once Texas signed up, A&M, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State would follow, giving their public commitments to the league.

"Until that time," Beebe said, "you never know for sure."

Pac-10 officials, thinking they had the Longhorns locked up, don't know what changed Texas' mind, according to the Pac-10 source.
When Beebe and his crew turned out the lights in Room 516, they hadn’t just saved the Big 12 Conference. The creation of a 16-team Pac-10 would have been the first domino ushering in the era of the superconference and the end of college sports as we know it. The Big Ten and SEC would have had to expand — this is a competitive game, after all — and that would have likely left other conferences to live through the Big 12’s experience.

On Tuesday morning, the Big 12 office received 20 red and white roses. The card read “unity.” It was from the Big East Conference.
Big 12 may be saved, but it still has work to do in long run

By SAM MELLINGER

The Big 12 is crumbled one day, potentially richer than ever the next, and in this breakneck business Dan Beebe doesn’t get time for a touchdown dance.

For the moment he is the conquering commissioner, the leader of a conference brought back from the dead, even if the credit needs to at least be shared with a certain power triumvirate south of here.

The Big 12 is saved. That means more here in Kansas City than any place on the planet, but it won’t mean squat if it doesn’t stay together long-term. Toward that point, it is striking to take inventory of what the conference has and doesn’t have in its moment of victory.

They don’t have a new television deal. No signed agreement, either. Just a bunch of public statements from schools clearly out for their own self-interests.

What they do have is a bunch of schools bonded by convenience and profit more than trust and commonalities. The schools in the North don’t like falling further behind Texas’ money, and the schools in the South won’t forget Missouri hiking its skirt and flirting with the Big Ten.

This is a real issue now, and it’s not going away.

“Any kind of exercise like this results in some bruises that we’re going to have to heal,” Beebe says. “But I think there’s also even a higher level of understanding of how much we need each other. My full anticipation as we move forward and heal the bruises is we’re going to have a level of commitment that hasn’t been there in the past.”

Those words sound more like hope than fact. Along with securing the best possible television contracts for the Big 12, Beebe’s top priority has to be repairing the damage done over the last year of realignment talk.

Because his league — whatever we end up calling it — has an image problem. This is the buzz now from some college sports insiders. The Big 12 survives, and that’s good. But there is still real work to be done.
People hear Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon trashing other conference schools’ academics. They see one school wield enough power that some suggest calling the league the Big TeXas. And they definitely watched the video of powerful Oklahoma State booster T. Boone Pickens saying, among other things, “I don’t care about Missouri.”

There is a tendency to brush this all aside, to forgive it as “heat of the moment” stuff and act as if all is forgotten without really addressing it.

That’s the mistake that conference and school leaders are now making, pledging good feelings and strong commitment to a fan base smart enough to know a fib when they see it.

In place of animosity, the league needs to create more than just good vibes and happy appearances. This issue becomes directly tied to the schools’ bottom lines and the conference’s survival going forward. Two very important groups are paying very close attention.

For television networks, a divided conference has a weaker negotiating position. So much of keeping the Big 12 together is based on a fat TV deal that doesn’t yet exist.

For rival leagues, a divided conference provides tempting targets. If the Big Ten or SEC come calling again and don’t get an immediate rejection from Missouri or Texas or whoever else, we’re back to last week and the Armageddon fears.

The good news is this can be done with real and genuine efforts on all sides. The most tangible would be to get the 10 remaining schools to sign a pledge to stick together for at least 10 years. Make the penalties for breaking it so stiff — how’s $50 million sound? — that no school considers it and no rival conference takes it past the daydreaming stage.

Get that done and there can be no more questions about stability. Now the league can start playing offense instead of defense. Now the league can start swinging its stick back at some who’ve been attacking, and we’re looking at you, Pac-10.

Think about it. After a remarkable week, the Big 12 is now stronger than the Pac-10. USC football is that league’s king and just got hit with one of the NCAA’s strongest penalties since SMU’s death penalty.

Texas and its posse just turned down the Pac-10 for the Big 12, where they’ll earn more money and play their games in a more network-friendly time zone.

Plus, Pac-10 commissioner Larry Scott has now replaced Beebe as college sports’ boob-of-the-moment. Scott put on a very public courtship of the Big 12’s power schools, got handed a very public rejection, and all he has to show for it is a nonfactor athletic program in Colorado, and possibly Utah, which will require an extra cut of revenue.

So this becomes a seminal moment for Beebe and the Big 12. It’s almost like a new league is starting, with an influx of cash from the departing schools’ penalties and an expected new TV
deal. Beebe is coming off his greatest professional triumph and has some political capital to spend.

He needs to do it quickly and effectively to galvanize 10 schools that in many cases have nothing in common except an uneven and inconvenient reliance on each other.

Do this right, and the Big 12 can be stronger than ever. Fail to take advantage, and the league could very well crumble within five years.

The good feelings of today will be washed away in a college sports world that won’t wait long to see what Beebe does with this opportunity.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri has trust in Big 12's ability to increase revenue

By Nikki Tekeei
June 15, 2010 | 9:08 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA - After reaffirming its commitment to the Big 12, Missouri has put its faith in the conference's pledge to bring it increased revenue.

In what MU Chancellor Brady Deaton described as a "responsible decision," the university now waits to find out just how much it will earn from a new television contract promised by Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe.

"The revenue projections related to the current and potential conference payoffs have the potential to become the second-highest in the nation and will enable us to sustain and build a stronger athletic program," Deaton said during a news conference Tuesday afternoon with UM System President Gary Forsee and Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden.

The chance for a more lucrative payout for the school now rests with Beebe's ability to come through with his promise.

The new television contract has yet to be finalized, but Alden said Beebe, his staff and consultants have given the 10 remaining Big 12 schools every confidence that the new package will increase both revenue and exposure.

According to the Omaha World-Herald, Missouri placed fourth, earning $10.4 million, in Big 12 revenue sharing during the 2008-2009 school year.

Despite the departure of Nebraska (Big 10) and Colorado (Pac-10), the way Missouri receives its share of conference revenue will remain unchanged.

"The same revenue distribution formula applies," Deaton said.
Alden said the distribution inequities have been accepted and understood, and MU will now “move forward with that knowing that it will be our responsibility to be able to address that in a way that we continue to improve on our athletic program.”

Even so, the Tigers will see an immediate increase in revenue under current contracts. The deals will now be split 10 ways, not 12, giving an automatic revenue bump to each school.

But it remains to be seen how exactly the estimated $20 million in combined fees Nebraska and Colorado now owe the conference for leaving will be doled out.

In a press conference given by Beebe on Tuesday morning, he indicated that Kansas, Kansas State, Baylor, Iowa State and Missouri were willing to forego their shares of the penalty money to Texas, Texas A&M and Oklahoma in an attempt to keep them from jumping conferences.

“Those five institutions were looking at a possibly very difficult future looking at probably significantly less revenue possibilities,” said Beebe at the conference posted on the Big 12 website. “Those five institutions in their judgment decided as they looked at the future media value, they wanted to ensure that those institutions stayed with them. If necessary, and I totally anticipate when we do our future media deal it won’t be, but if necessary, use some of the distribution that they might get from departing members to make sure that Texas A&M, Oklahoma and Texas were induced to stay with them in the conference.”

During Missouri’s press conference, Alden said, “There is no accuracy to that whatsoever.” Later, he continued by saying, “I haven’t heard that, and none of us in our league would believe that.”

According to the Associated Press, Big 12 Commissioner Bob Burda confirmed all 10 schools will share “withdrawal fees withheld from Colorado and Nebraska.” Burda called discussions about foregoing penalty fee benefits a “good-faith offer.”

“What the five institutions did was to agree to a broadly recognized need to amend our bylaws, and that’s the only action taken,” Deaton said. “In no way do we expect to be hurt financially by that,” he added, calling the decision “smart business” and the “absolute most responsible step for the University of Missouri and the Big 12.”
The amendment will give conference officials more “flexibility for appropriate revenue distributions,” Deaton said.

Whether the new deal will provide enough incentive to keep the conference together for the foreseeable future is unclear. There is no evidence of any contractual obligations for the remaining institutions to stay put.

“This is a word and a trust. And that’s very well respected within our 10 institutions,” Deaton said.
TAKE TWO: An alternative look at the day in sports

By Rus Baer

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

It’s getting to the point where a guy can’t go on a weekly golf excursion without the college conference landscape getting a complete overhaul. Here’s a look back at the week that was from the point of view of a guy who didn’t spend one day in the office worrying about this Big 12 (10?), Big Ten (Twelve?), Pac-10 (11 or 12?) mess.

Sunday, June 6: Everything is as it was … for the moment. But the big boys in the Big 12 appear a tad uptight about rumors of a few schools taking a gander at the Big Ten. Reportedly — you probably read that a lot last week — the Big 12 poses an ultimatum to Missouri and Nebraska. Pledge your allegiance to the conference — or, at the very least, Texas — or the entire South Division will pledge its allegiance to the Pac-10. That sounds fair.

Monday, June 7: While the South Division schools played hardball, one North Division foe swallowed its pride and reportedly begged the Cornhuskers and Tigers to remain in the Big 12. That school was Kansas. This story makes every MU Tiger alum giddy and offers another excuse to post something crass about the Jayhawks on Facebook. Careful Tiger fans. You know what they say about Karma …

Tuesday, June 8: All quiet. Too quiet. Perhaps the calm before the storm?

Wednesday, June 9: Colorado, yes Colorado, accepts an invitation to the Pac-10. That collective exhale you heard was not a gasp or sigh. It was a yawn. Oh well. The Big 12 is now 11. The Pac-10 is now 11. The Colorado Buffaloes are still irrelevant.

Thursday, June 10: With the Friday ultimatum looming, reports have Nebraska headed to the Big Ten. And Missouri … well, it’s still thinking. At least that’s what university officials say they’re doing. Oh, by the way, they are strongly committed to the Big 12, which no longer has 12 members and appears to be crumbling around them.

Friday, June 11: Nebraska officially accepts an invitation to join the Big Ten, which already had 11 members. Husker Nation rejoices and starts making annoying posters using the Nebraska “N” for the last letter in the Big Ten, which now has 12 members. Missouri fans are left wondering what the Tigers have up their sleeves. They are going to make a move, right? The
University has a plan in place, yes? Fear not, Tiger fans. Athletic Director Mike Alden informs media members that the university is not operating with its head in the sand. Well, that’s a relief.

**Saturday, June 12:** With six sportswriters in the wedding party of Tribune colleague Steve Walentik and a handful more on hand as invited guests, it wouldn’t surprise anyone to hear the Tigers make an announcement about their conference future. But no one has to leave the service or reception to file a story. Wonder if the marriage will last as long as these new conference affiliations?

**Sunday, June 13:** Missouri is still committed to the Big 12 — which is down to 10 — because it appears the Tigers really have nowhere else to go. Meanwhile, every South Division program is reported to be moving to the Pac-10 ... or is it the SEC? In a panic, MU fans attempt to rationalize how a move to the Mountain West Conference would be a good thing.

**Monday, June 14:** Texas saves the day, the conference and the athletic lives of the remaining programs in the North Division — for now — by announcing it will remain in the Big 12 (minus two). How nice of Texas! The Longhorns should probably be allowed to run the conference now.

Reach Rus Baer at 573-815-1787 or e-mail rbaer@columbiatribune.com.
UM system President Gary Forsee, Chancellor Brady Deaton and Athletic Director Mike Alden held a news conference Tuesday afternoon to discuss MU's future in the Big 12.

The conference began with the trio reaffirming their allegiance to the 10-member Big 12.

"We look forward to a very bright future for our conference," Alden said.

Deaton said MU is committed to the Big 12 for the foreseeable future, and is in it for the long haul. MU never had any offer from the Big 10, and chose not to engage in any speculation beyond simply doing due diligence.

"We examined all alternatives," Deaton said about earlier in the year, when Big 10 expansion rumors began. "We wanted to be prepared for whatever came down the road."

Alden said no changes have been made regarding revenue distribution among the remaining 10 members of the Big 12. He said the restructured television deal for the remaining Big 12 members that several news outlets, including ESPN, had reported lured Texas to stay in the conference was still in discussion and had not been finalized.

"It will stay the same," Alden said. "We accept that. We'll move forward. It's incumbent on us to win more games and get more exposure on television."

With two less members, the football season will be comprised of nine conference games and three non-conference games. In basketball, it will be a double round robin, resulting in 18 conference games.

Alden denied rumors that exit fees recovered from the University of Nebraska and University of Colorado would be unevenly divided.

"When we do recover those exit fees, then those monies will be put in a holding account and distributed according the policies of the league," Alden said.
MU researchers look to give ice cream a healthier flair

By Emily Smoucha
June 16, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — An MU doctoral student is looking for ways to take some guilt out of eating ice cream.

Ting-Ning Lin is working with food chemistry professor Ingolf Gruen to give ice cream some health appeal by adding fiber, antioxidants and microorganisms that aid in digestion.

During a recent campus presentation about the research, Gruen handed out samples of Tiger Stripe ice cream and noted that 40 percent of its calories come from fat — twice the recommended amount.

“There is no doubt about it,” Gruen said. “Regular ice cream is high in fat.”

The Center for Science in the Public Interest puts ice cream at No. 4 on its list of worst foods. The center singled out Haagen-Dazs chocolate ice cream, stating a half-cup has 270 calories and a whopping 11 grams of saturated fat — 55 percent of the daily recommended total.

According to the International Dairy Foods Association, more than 90 percent of households in the U.S. eat ice cream and other frozen desserts. Regular ice cream made up 61.1 percent of the frozen dessert market in 2008, and reduced-fat, low-fat and nonfat ice cream accounted for 25.4 percent.

When consumers were moving away from full-fat ice cream, Gruen from 1996 to 2005 studied how the flavor profile was affected by low- or reduced-fat content. Consumer preferences have since shifted back to full-fat ice cream, he said, and the research at MU is now focused on ways to give ice cream a dose of goodness.
“I hope that eventually it will impact people’s lives in two ways,” Gruen said. “No. 1 that they will have a source of healthful ingredients in their diet through a food commodity that they enjoy, ice cream, as well as that it will hopefully alleviate or relieve some of the guilt that some people have associated with the idea of eating ice cream.”

The first phase of Lin’s research is adding probiotics — beneficial microorganisms that live in people’s intestines — and prebiotics that provide food for the probiotics. She’s training panelists to recognize different aspects of the flavor and texture, such as the intensity of the sweetness.

“Those functional ingredients will for sure give some health benefits,” Lin said. “But I don’t know if people will like it.”

Lin will then add fiber in various concentrations, as well as antioxidants in the form of acai berries, and have volunteers judge which one they like best.

Tony Layson, a manager at Sparky’s, said it’s strange to add these ingredients to ice cream.

“You shouldn’t try to get your fiber intake from ice cream,” he said.

Layson said that every couple of days, the ice cream store on Ninth Street will get someone who asks whether there’s a low-sugar or low-fat option. There isn’t.

Layson said he eats ice cream every day, but sometimes it’s just a spoonful. He said the key to eating desserts is moderation.

“Ice cream’s dessert, and dessert’s not supposed to be healthy,” he said. “You’re supposed to have a little bit of it and enjoy it a whole bunch.”