MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

Jan. 7, 2015
EDITORIAL: The Big Five

Trying to remember the Big Eight

By Henry J. Waters III

Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri has achieved lofty status in the world of college athletics. Our teams play among the elite in the top athletic conferences in the nation: Big Ten, Big 12, Pacific-12, Atlantic Coast and our own Southeastern, thought until this week to be the premier football league.

Being atop the football pinnacle is no small potatoes. Revenues from college sports have risen to astronomical levels. Football accounts for more than 60 percent, and the pie is growing. ESPN has agreed to pay $7.3 billion to televise seven major bowl and playoff games a year for 12 years, and before the first playoff is history officials contemplate expanding that extravaganza from four to eight teams. The only limiting factor seems to be how much physical endeavor players can stand.

I reported here earlier MU Athletic Director Mike Alden’s response when I asked him where the money spiral might end. “The fans will tell us,” said he, meaning presciently as long as we oglers keep demonstrating our addiction, primarily by boosting television ratings, the end remains beyond the horizon.

Recently ESPN’s football programming guru told The New York Times the market is not saturated. “Fans pretty much have an insatiable appetite for college football,” said Ilan Ben-Hanan, planning no doubt to put his network’s money where his mouth is.

How else to explain the contract recently handed new Coach Jim Harbaugh at the University of Michigan? The fledgling deal gives Diamond Jim $5 million a year for six years plus bonuses. If he brings Michigan back to a semblance of the former glory fans demand, no telling where Harbaugh’s ceiling is.

And no telling how much influence contracts like his will have on others around the country. Now that Tigers fans and university managers are happy with Coach Gary Pinkel, stay tuned for good news coming his way.
Even more, NCAA officials are thinking about paying college athletes, who, after all, are the performers who make it all possible. Lost in this equation is the quaint idea these youngsters get “scholarships” for ostensibly coming to school to get educated, a rather nice payday in itself.

But many of today’s football practitioners and hangers-on no doubt share the sentiment expressed two years ago on Twitter by Ohio State quarterback Cardale Jones, “Why should we have to go to class if we came here to play FOOTBALL. We ain’t come to play SCHOOL, classes are POINTLESS.”

Jones will start in the national championship game Monday. Apparently he will not be thinking much about his potential academic degree. Who can blame him?

To those steeped in nostalgia, Cardell’s comment saddens, but as a true description of modern circumstance, who can argue? College football rivals the NFL in economic clout. The best football players seek professional contracts more than college degrees. If they receive an NFL job, they are likely to make more their first year or two than they would in a lifetime otherwise.

The very high chance they will suffer debilitating injury during their college and professional careers? Worth it for the anticipated payoff.

It’s enough to rattle an aging person who remembers when the Big 8 was the big deal, but not this one. I’m planning to watch the national championship game, trying my best to ignore the commercials but aware those messages are paying for new stadiums, uniforms, sky-high coaches’ salaries and — can it be? — above-the-table payoffs for athletes who once posed as students.

Don Faurot is turning over in his grave, and when Faurot turns, the earth moves.

HJW III

Former MU professor Loren Reid dies at 109

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, January 6, 2015 at 11:30 am

Columbia lost a former University of Missouri professor, a writer, a lifetime teacher and a traveler last month
Loren Reid was 109 when he died on Christmas. You might remember the feature we published in the Tribune in August, highlighting his life as he reached a new milestone by turning 109.

When I asked Reid during our interview a few days before the story ran if there are any other secrets to making it almost a decade past the century mark, the former MU professor laughed.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he said. “I guess I didn’t have any bad habits. I worked steadily and faithfully.”

Reid taught at MU from 1935 to 1938 and again from 1944 to 1975. He published multiple autobiographical books and textbooks during his tenure as a professor, most of which he proudly displayed on his dresser at The Neighborhoods skilled nursing center where he lived.

His books were primarily autobiographical. Growing up in Gilman City where his father owned the newspaper and the city revolved around a train station — as Reid recalled to me during our talk — he oftentimes had the chance to interview people who were traveling all over the country about their journeys. One of his books, “Hurry Home Wednesday,” chronicled his newspaper experiences.

I would encourage you to take a peek at Reid’s obituary and the feature from this fall in honor of his life and service to education and writing.

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**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

Coach says former Mizzou wide receiver Dorial Green-Beckham will enter NFL Draft

**BY BLAIR KERKHOFF**

01/06/2015 4:21 PM

Dorial Green-Beckham, who was considered the nation’s top recruit when he signed with Missouri three years ago, told his coach he will enter the NFL Draft.

**Green-Beckham transferred from Missouri to Oklahoma after last year, and Sooners coach Bob Stoops said Tuesday that DGB told him a week ago that he would turn pro.**
Green-Beckman’s college playing career lasted two seasons at Missouri and included several off-field incidents that led to coach Gary Pinkel dismissing him last April.

There had been two drug-related arrests, and the dismissal was prompted by an incident in which he allegedly forced opened an apartment door and pushed an 18-year-old woman down a flight of steps. He was not charged in the incident.

Green-Beckham, the top-ranked prospect by Rivals.com out of Hillcrest High in Springfield, caught 28 passes for 395 yards and five touchdowns as a freshman.

He broke out as a sophomore, with 59 receptions and 12 touchdowns, including two against Auburn in the SEC Championship Game. Green-Beckham was chosen second-team All-SEC for 2013.

He was accepted at Oklahoma before the 2014 season, but the Sooners were denied a waiver that would have made Green-Beckham eligible immediately. He sat out the year as a transfer and would have been eligible for the 2015 season.

Instead, it appears the 6-foot-6, 225-pound Green-Beckham will end his troubled college career and try to start one in the NFL.

“He obviously has a lot of red flags, but he can play ...” ESPN analyst Todd McShay said Tuesday. “If he was clean off the field, he would be a top-20 pick.”

The Star’s Terez A. Paylor contributed to this report