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## AP source: Missouri wanted Big 10 invite most

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER  
Associated Press

**Missouri is hoping to join the Southeastern Conference but would have preferred an offer from the Big Ten that never came, a university official said Wednesday.**

Missouri hoped to join the Big Ten last year but the league instead chose Nebraska. The university official said the Big Ten remains Missouri's top choice but that conference "has no interest."

"That's what's left," the official said, referring to the SEC. The official, who is familiar with school discussions involving conference affiliation, spoke on condition of anonymity because the school has not commented publicly about its intentions.

Missouri curators agreed unanimously Tuesday night to give Chancellor Brady Deaton the authority to look elsewhere rather than immediately commit to the reeling Big 12. Just one day earlier, Deaton and other Big 12 chancellors and presidents agreed to equally share revenue from the conference's most lucrative television deals if member schools agree to give those top-tier rights to the league for at least six years.

The agreement is subject to approval by university governing boards. It was a step Missouri curators don't want to take until the school is able to "fully explore options for conference affiliation ... which best serve the interests of the University of Missouri," board chairman Warren Erdman told The Associated Press.

The Big 12 is down to 10 members and will lose Texas A&M to the SEC next year after the departures of Colorado (to the Pac-12) and Nebraska.

SEC athletic directors and Commissioner Mike Slive met Wednesday in Birmingham, Ala., to discuss the logistics of Texas A&M's arrival. Mississippi State athletic director Scott Stricklin said there were no discussions about a 14th team, though Slive has not ruled out further expansion.

Sticking with the Big 12 remains an option, Deaton said Tuesday, and the costs of leaving could prove troublesome -- Missouri is likely to forfeit most of its annual conference revenues.

The revenue-sharing plan approved Sunday by the Big 12 board of directors - a move designed to keep Missouri and other potential stray members in the fold - would give each school an estimated \$20 million in June.

And that figure is expected to grow by 2013 when the league's new 13-year contract with Fox Sports kicks in, according to two people with knowledge of the deal and ties to the Big 12. They spoke only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the revenue-sharing plan.

The Big 12's television contract with ABC/ESPN expires in 2016 and also likely will bring in additional money when renegotiated.

The SEC, by contrast, distributed \$18.3 million in revenue to each of its 12 members this year. But that league can also expect more lucrative contracts when the next round of TV rights negotiations occur.

State Sen. Kurt Schaefer, a Republican whose Columbia district includes the Missouri campus, said his constituents are "hands down" in favor of an SEC move. Now that Missouri has made its desire to roam known, he has doubts that a union with the Big 12 can be salvaged.

"It's kind of like a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship," said Schaefer, a Missouri graduate. "Once it's fractured and somebody gets a wandering eye, can you repair that? It's not clear."

While Missouri is a charter member of the Big 12, founded in 1996 when the Big Eight schools added four members of the defunct Southwest Conference, dissatisfaction with the conference has grown. In the early '90s, with the Big Eight on the verge of collapse, Missouri pushed to join the Big Ten and a group of state business leaders even formed a lobbying group.

A year ago, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon, an avid sports fan, was an outspoken supporter of a move to the Big Ten, noting that its schools, like Missouri, are members of the invitation-only Association of American Universities.

The Big Ten instead chose another AAU school in Nebraska.

Besides being a fresh blow to the Big 12, a Missouri departure would threaten its long-standing rivalry with neighboring Kansas, one of the oldest in college sports.

Kansas basketball coach Bill Self told The Associated Press on Wednesday he would be in no

hurry to schedule Missouri as a nonconference opponent if the Tigers decided to leave the Big 12 and sever a conference tie with the Jayhawks that dates to 1907.

"I don't know why we would want to do that, if they've done something that put KU in jeopardy," Self said.

Such a move would not be unprecedented for Kansas. When Notre Dame negotiated its own football television deal with NBC, causing the television contract held by the College Football Association to collapse, Kansas canceled its home-and-home basketball agreement with the Irish.

Erdman, a Kansas City attorney, said Missouri takes long-term relationships and regional affiliations seriously. But the financial allure of seven-figure TV contracts and the broader benefits of such deals to a university are equally if not more important, he said.

"The cultural and economic effects of a decision like this on all parts of the state are important," he said. "And we should be sensitive to those factors as part of our overall consideration. However, when it's all said and done, our fiduciary duty is to the University of Missouri."

Missouri alumni, donors and fans haven't been shy about sharing their opinions with university leaders, barraging curators with emails encouraging a Big 12 exit.

"It's been pretty overwhelmingly positive to leave the Big 12," said Todd McCubbin, executive director of the Missouri Alumni Association. "And the SEC has been a popular choice."

## Among the fan base, much ado over MU's conference prospects

By MIKE DeARMOND

**COLUMBIA | The most meaningful news on Wednesday in a town abuzz over Missouri's defiant announcement to shop for a possible new home outside the Big 12 came out of the office of the Southeastern Conference in Birmingham, Ala.**

In an email to The Star, associate commissioner Charles Bloom said, "There is no statement from us today."

Neither was there any denial that the SEC was open to welcoming Missouri or another applicant as the league's 14th member.

Later Wednesday, Oklahoma president David Boren told reporters he thought the chances of Missouri staying in the Big 12 were "50-50." Boren also said the Big 12 would look to expand "within seven to 10 days" and that there were "three or four good choices."

Word spread quickly across the nation to a fan base already convinced — following the Board of Curators' authorizing chancellor Brady Deaton to explore other conferences — that Mizzou's departure from the Big 12 was inevitable.

"It's going to happen," said fan and booster Drew Carver from Arizona. "And there isn't anything Texas or Oklahoma can do about it."

In Kansas City, MU grad and attorney Paul Blackman was no less enthused about MU seeking a stable place outside a league that has lost Nebraska, Colorado and Texas A&M.

"It showed that they will be responsive to the public, and they will do the right thing," Blackman said, "even if it's a painful thing to do."

Blackman was also mindful of the questions it would raise for Kansas City and a possible end as host of the Big 12 basketball tournament.

"I feel bad about this," Blackman said. "But it was the right thing to do."

“People have to look at this as a 50-year, 100-year move, not what happens when (Gary) Pinkel’s not (football) coach. People forget that a year ago a lot of people were fearful that we would wind up in the Mountain West or worse.”

There is no assurance, at this point, of where Missouri will be playing football and other sports next season. Two SEC athletic directors have indicated the conference will go to 14 teams, perhaps soon, and The Star previously reported that MU had received an informal offer to join the SEC.

But after a meeting of SEC athletic directors on Wednesday, officials said the discussion was about how to add Texas A&M to its schedules as a 13th member. They either declined to discuss Missouri or deferred questions to commissioner Mike Slive.

Clay Travis, an author who runs a SEC-centric blog, theorized that a drop-dead date for Missouri to leave might be Dec. 1, because leaving the Big 12 after that date would trigger a larger exit fee than Texas A&M’s, reportedly \$28 million over two years.

“I would think by Halloween this thing would kind of be ironed out,” he told The Star. “I don’t think Missouri wants to be in the position of being out there dangling.”

There has been virtually no informed speculation about the Big Ten being interested in swooping in to tempt Missouri after an anticipated invitation wasn’t forthcoming a year ago. Publicly, the Big Ten has stated it is not expanding.

Several MU administration officials said Wednesday they haven’t heard anything about the Big Ten.

The popular thinking among many who see the SEC as Missouri’s probable new home is that MU officials would not risk alienating the SEC by holding a separate negotiation with the Big Ten, and that the curators would not have made their decision if MU did not have an assurance of acceptance into the SEC.

While some have questioned whether Missouri could compete in football in the SEC and whether the Tigers should leave the Big 12 because they have been members of the conference or its predecessors dating to 1907, there are voices in the Southeast that such a move makes sense.

Columnist Mark Bradley of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution wrote: “If the SEC pairs Missouri with Texas A&M, it will be harder to make the case that the biggest league was utterly craven in its desires. Those are two good schools. They’ll broaden the base without rendering the league top-heavy. They’ll make the SEC not just bigger but better.”

After criticizing the Big 12, MU football coach Gary Pinkel on Wednesday took a step back in a St. Louis radio interview.

“They do ask me my opinion,” Pinkel said of his input to MU officials. “But, this is bigger than me. This isn’t my decision. They ask me, but this is the chancellor’s decision.”

Deaton resigned his position as chairman of the Big 12 board of directors on Tuesday. And, while interim Big 12 commissioner Chuck Neinas indicated Monday that he planned to talk with Deaton about Missouri’s concerns, Deaton’s administrative assistant said that no meeting was on the schedule for Wednesday.

At Mizzou Arena, where Missouri men’s basketball players were getting in some conditioning work, senior Kim English stopped long enough to acknowledge a spate of Twitter messages with a Mizzou-to-the-SEC spin.

English — approaching his senior year — also said on Twitter he wanted to be in the stands when the Missouri men’s team played Arkansas, where Mike Anderson, formerly of MU, is now the coach.

“I don’t care about the SEC stuff,” English said, other than he was just having fun.

English turned the discussion to a more sobering thought, that senior teammate Laurence Bowers might complete his eligibility with an Mizzou hoops team in its first year of SEC play.

Bowers tore an ACL on Monday, and is out for the coming season. School officials said Wednesday that Bowers planned on taking a redshirt and returning for the 2012-13 season.

“I’m not playing in the SEC,” English said. “But Laurence is my brother. That’s real.”

As real, it seemed in Columbia, as the move so many anticipate for Mizzou from the Big 12 to the SEC.

COLUMBIA DAILY  
**TRIBUNE**

## Potential move to SEC elicits excitement

Robert Cohen/St. Louis Post-Dispatch, AP



University of Missouri interim President Steve Owens, left, and MU Chancellor Brady Deaton leave Tuesday night's press conference after a curators meeting in St. Louis. The curators granted Deaton the power to explore the options for a new conference home for Missouri.

By David Briggs

Columbia Daily Tribune Wednesday, October 5, 2011

ST. LOUIS — These secessionists knew no bounds.

**As reporters waited for Missouri officials to emerge from yesterday's curators meeting, fans infiltrated the conference call intended for out-of-town media to participate in the press briefing. The phone line went from silence to frat house. The pranksters howled and chanted a three-letter creed.**

"SEC! SEC! SEC!"

Finally, a public-relations official muted the line. It may have been the first time in weeks a Missouri fan was hushed.

MU supporters were confident last night their voices were heard after the curators delegated power to Chancellor Brady Deaton to explore the school's conference options — the potential first step in a migration from the Big 12 to the Southeastern Conference.

"I could not be happier," said David Skzubiel, a 38-year-old sales executive from Chesterfield, N.J., who plans to resume — and increase — his annual donation to the Tiger Scholarship Fund after recently canceling his usual gift in frustration with the athletic department.

"I'll have the book ready to write out a check the minute I see an SEC invite," said Ed Jones, a purchasing manager from Lake Ozark.

Few issues have galvanized Missouri fans like conference realignment.

In near-unanimous support of bolting the dwindling Big 12 unless Missouri exacted major concessions from Texas & Co., many fans spent the past two weeks involved in a relentless grassroots campaign. They sent thousands of emails to Athletic Director Mike Alden and the curators, called the governor's office and wrote pages of message-board screeds.

While some contend those crying "SEC" are a vocal minority, the approval ratings for a move have been extreme. The Tribune filed an open-records request for one day of emails from fans to the curators. Not one of about 200 messages made a case for Missouri to stay in the Big 12.

Of those, at least 10 fans suggested future donations would hinge on Missouri's decision. Columbia lawyer Clark Jones pledged to quadruple his annual donation to the TSF to \$12,000 if Missouri joined the SEC. Joe Gallagher, 30, of St. Louis, vowed that if MU did not land in the SEC, "you will never see another dime from me again."

"I think I just might have been really angry when I'm doing that," Gallagher said with a laugh last night, adding that he will increase his annual TSF donation by at least a "few hundred dollars" if MU heads south.

These same fans also admit they would miss the Big 12. They would miss the century-old conference rivalry with Kansas and the easy drives to Ames, Iowa, and Manhattan, Kan. Missouri is smack in the heartland, not the sundress-and-blazer culture of the SEC.

"I still think the Big 12 is the best place for our football team and our best chance to win and win big like we all want to do," said Kevin Stanfill, 29, of St. Louis. "I'm not talking 8-4 seasons, I'm talking conference championships."

Still, he said, "You have to take a seat at the big boys table when you have the chance."

For many, the big boys table is a status symbol. A conference switch is not so much about stability and a jump in revenue as it is Missouri disposing of its perceived kid-brother status in the Big 12.

Fans told Missouri curators the school could not afford another public-relations snafu, pointing most recently to the one-way flirtation with the Big Ten last summer, the snub by Purdue basketball Coach Matt Painter when it appeared he might take the Missouri job and the ensuing surprise hire of basketball Coach Frank Haith.

Ed Jones said he became infuriated when Deaton continued to make “milquetoast comments” about saving the fractured conference as recently as last month.

“Hey, does this guy realize who’s actually paying his salary?” he recalled thinking.

On Sept. 21, Jones typed a letter to the curators that pained him to write. He loves Missouri. He remembers getting chills as a 15-year-old on the way to his first MU football game at Memorial Stadium and running a personal-best time in a high school track meet at Brewer Fieldhouse — “I know it’s because of the venue,” he said. Jones attends as many MU games as possible and spends \$40 to watch the football team thump lower-level teams on pay-per-view broadcasts each fall.

Jones lives for Missouri. Yet if MU chose the Big 12 over an offer from the SEC, he said he was prepared to sever financial ties with his university.

“I will pledge to never again attend a sporting event of any kind at Missouri — or wherever Missouri may be the host, contribute to the TSF, buy Missouri licensed products, nor spend any money for PPV ... as long as the current administration are at MU,” he wrote in the email.

Jones’ reaction last night?

“Ecstatic,” he said.



## Big 12 keeps one eye on Missouri, another on expansion

By Steve Wieberg, USA TODAY

Officials in the beleaguered Big 12 Conference worked Wednesday on two fronts, moving toward expansion by at least one school and trying to keep Missouri from creating a new vacancy.

**Texas men's athletics director DeLoss Dodds believes the Big 12 will be fine if Missouri decides to leave the league.**

With or without Missouri, most expressed confidence that the twice-downsized league will survive.

"Absolutely," Texas athletics director DeLoss Dodds said. "I've had enough conversations with enough people to know, if they leave, that we'll continue and build ourselves back up to where we'll be fine."

Dodds stressed that he wants to keep Missouri in what's now a nine-team league, just as he'd hoped the Big 12 could hang onto Texas A&M before the Aggies opted to move to the Southeastern Conference effective next year. But stay or go, he also said he'd like to know soon. "If their desire is not to be in the Big 12," he said of the Tigers, "they need to take the option. Because the worst-case scenario would be for them to be in the Big 12 but not want to be in the Big 12."

"They're a good member. They've been a member for a long time. They've got great rivalries. It's been a positive thing, and I'd like to see it continue. ... I hope they decide quickly."

Missouri officially declared Tuesday that it was weighing its conference options, holding off on handing the Big 12 irrevocable control of the school's most lucrative television rights for at least six years. The league's board of directors endorsed the measure as a means of discouraging further defections; it would leave the Big 12 in control of a school's TV rights even if it leaves the conference.

Missouri officials are concerned about the Big 12's stability beyond those six years, however, after seeing Nebraska, Colorado and Texas A&M choose to move in a little more than the past year. There is disgruntlement, too, over Texas' and ESPN's deployment of the school's new Longhorn Network, particularly its use of any high school programming and desire to carry multiple Texas football games, potentially diminishing the value of leaguewide TV agreements.

No timetable was given for a decision from Mizzou. Athletics directors in the SEC met Wednesday to work out scheduling and other details related to Texas A&M's entry as a 13th member next fall, but Mississippi State AD Scott Stricklin said there were no discussions about a new, 14th member.

The Big 12, meanwhile, is actively pursuing expansion to fill at least the hole left by A&M. An official in the league with knowledge of the deliberations, who asked to remain anonymous because of their sensitivity, said the candidates include TCU, Brigham Young and Louisville. TCU's inclusion is an indication that the league has altered its initial intention to look outside its current geographic boundaries.

Louisville's and TCU's inclusion is troublesome for the already-depleted Big East.

Is the Big 12 out of danger?

The chairman of Kansas' board of regents said Wednesday that Kansas and Kansas State remain committed. "It's not that there aren't other options, it's just that the other options aren't as good," Ed McKechnie told the Associated Press. "We have good (leadership) teams in place. We know where we are going, and we know what's right for our students."

Said John Bell, a Norman ophthalmologist who heads Oklahoma's board of regents, "I don't see Missouri leaving making it any worse than A&M did."

But two weeks after OU, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech saw the Pacific-12 end their flirtation with that league, Bell didn't rule out re-examining alternatives if Missouri moves. "It's not like we're going to suddenly say 'we're out of here, this totally destroys it.' I don't think it does that," he said. "But ... we have to look at our options. Texas has to know we're looking at our options. However limited they might be, they're probably not as limited as people think. Oklahoma's a pretty good brand."

## SEC athletic directors meet, no statement on Mizzou

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. | Southeastern Conference athletic directors and commissioner Mike Slive met Wednesday to discuss the logistics of Texas A&M's entry as the league's 13th member, **but they did not discuss Missouri, at least publicly.**

SEC associate commissioner Charles Bloom said the meeting at league headquarters had been scheduled several weeks ago and was "to integrate Texas A&M into the Southeastern Conference and plan for a 13-team schedule for all sports in 2012-13." Bloom also told The Star that there would be no SEC statement about Missouri on Wednesday.

SEC school administrators have indicated that adding a 14th school is likely, perhaps imminent. The University of Missouri Board of Curators voted Tuesday to authorize chancellor Brady Deaton to explore other conferences. The Star previously reported that MU had received an informal offer to join the SEC.

But Mississippi State athletic director Scott Stricklin said Tuesday the conference is in a wait-and-see mode on further expansion.

"The commissioner has done such a great job of positioning us, and we continue just to kind of look for his guidance and for him to lead us in whatever direction we decide on," Stricklin said. "When he says, 'Hey, here's an idea,' we're going to listen to him.

"Until then, I think we are all very comfortable with where we are at 13 for the time being."

Slive has said he would prepare to go into next year on the assumption that there will be 13 teams, which would create unbalanced divisions. As for adding a 14th, he has emphasized that the SEC would be "strategic and thoughtful" in expansion but otherwise shed little light on the league's plans.

Several athletic directors declined comment or referred questions to Slive.

"We can't talk about it," Florida A.D. Jeremy Foley said. "We were talking about A&M."

Nonetheless, there has been plenty of talk about a 14th team.

South Carolina president Harris Pastides has said he doesn't "think 13 is a sustainable number, but I think 14 is." He added that he doesn't advocate growing to a 16-team league.

Tennessee A.D. Dave Hart has also said the SEC would expand again but that members need to be deliberate in taking that next step.

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## SEC meets amid flurry of talk

BY VAHE GREGORIAN • vgregorian@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8199 | Posted:  
Thursday, October 6, 2011 12:00 am

**In the wake of calculated words and actions Tuesday night from the University of Missouri regarding Mizzou's future athletics affiliation, athletics directors from MU's potential new home, the Southeastern Conference, met Wednesday.**

Afterward, the SEC chimed in with a statement about fresh plans ... to weave Texas A&M into the league.

"The purpose of the meeting was to integrate Texas A&M into the Southeastern Conference and plan for a 13-team schedule for all sports in 2012-2013," the conference said.

With that "nothing to see here" diversion begins the next phase of Mizzou's apparent exit plan from the Big 12: a semantics dance, with veils shed step-by-step.

If MU hasn't already decided to bolt, if and when it determines to, its escape probably won't be made in one swoop.

Instead, executing the maneuver figures to be a process with multiple stages, each designed to stand on decorum and minimize potential legal snags that could come from the Big 12 or its members as a fourth school in just over a year determines to leave.

Why would anyone stand in a school's path away from dysfunction junction, a k a the Big 12? It's not just the concept of crabs in the bucket, seeking to pull back one that might get out.

While an MU departure isn't likely in itself to obliterate the conference, it would further muddle the Big 12's future.

Beyond the symbolic fact that 33 percent of the conference would have defected, the immediate issue would be the impact a second school leaving would have on the 13-year, \$1.2 billion deal with Fox Sports the Big 12 signed in April.

Baylor president Ken Starr, known for a certain tenacity, led the legal rumbblings to freeze A&M from the SEC as part of a broader strategy to keep the conference intact, and some are concerned that Starr among others could act again if the value of the contract could be diminished.

That's one of the reasons the SEC must remain publicly noncommittal, and one of the reasons nothing in realignment is a certainty until it's signed, sealed, delivered, notarized and archived.

Although there may be a way wherein an MU-SEC transition announcement could be completed sooner than later, sources familiar with the scene suggested Wednesday that words such as 'slow' and "careful" will be ruling principles in the days to come.

Moreover, it's conceivable, albeit improbable, that Missouri may yet be deliberating its desire.

More likely, as indicated by resistance to committing to a six-year grant of rights call by the Big 12 and Mizzou chancellor Brady Deaton stepping down Tuesday as chairman of the Big 12 board, MU already may have emotionally, and strategically, checked out.

Some believe assurances by Texas to stop exploring ways to include high school coverage or more than the allotted one Big 12 game on its Longhorn Network could be enough.

Others wonder if a longer sign-off on grant of rights would do it, especially as part of a move toward equal revenue-sharing MU has long wanted.

Big 12 interim commissioner Chuck Neinas was to visit Columbia this week as part of an effort to coax MU to stay. As of Tuesday night, that trip was still on, a source said. But the same source did not respond to repeated attempts to clarify Wednesday.

If MU does seek to SEC-ede, expect the blueprint to resemble that of Texas A&M, if not in actual time frame at least in procedure.

On Aug. 16, the A&M board voted to give president R. Bowen Loftin the authority to make future decisions on conference alignment. A&M then engaged the process Aug. 25 with a letter to the Big 12 officially notifying it that it was "exploring options" and requested that the Big 12 "outline the process to be followed should the university elect to withdraw from the conference."

MU invoked some similar words Tuesday when Warren Erdman, chairman of the Board of Curators, said Deaton was authorized "to take any and all actions necessary to fully explore options for conference affiliation ..."

Two days after A&M sent that initial letter, Big 12 leaders convened to discuss criteria for A&M's departure.

Two more days later, on Aug. 29, A&M received a letter from the Big 12 outlining withdrawal procedures "according to the financial provisions of the Big 12 bylaws and mutual waivers of legal claims," a spokesman told the Houston Chronicle.

On Aug. 31, A&M informed the Big 12 that it would 'submit an application to join another conference' and leave by July 2012 if accepted.

A week later, the SEC voted tentatively to accept A&M once late-game legal impediments were removed.

Once that wrangling effectively was sorted out by virtue of Oklahoma and Texas not going to the Pac-12 and thus seemingly keeping the Big 12 viable, the SEC admitted A&M on Sept. 25.

That was nearly six weeks after A&M first flashed its cards, a timetable that barring the legal roadblocks A&M faced wouldn't figure to be remotely as long for MU if it chooses to go and the SEC is ready to embrace a 14th member to weave in for 2012-2013.



## SEC athletics directors meet to discuss Texas A&M logistics

By Erick Smith, USA TODAY

**Athletics directors in the Southeastern Conference met Wednesday in Birmingham, but the potential addition of Missouri was not on the agenda, according to the league.**

Discussions were centered around the logistics of adding Texas A&M as the 13th member next fall, a statement said.

"Today's meeting of the SEC athletic directors was planned immediately following the announcement of Texas A&M joining the league. The purpose of the meeting was to integrate Texas A&M into the Southeastern Conference and plan for a 13-team schedule for all sports in 2012-13. The transition team from the SEC office made its initial report in this meeting to the athletics directors with the focus on scheduling and championship formats. The SEC is excited to have Texas A&M in the league and looks forward to having the Aggies compete in the SEC next year."

Missouri is being mentioned as a possible addition to balance the league. The Big 12 school announced Tuesday that it had authorized chancellor Brady Deaton to explore its conference options.

The SEC maintains it is preparing as if no schools will be added before next fall.

"As of today, we are planning on going forward with a 13-team league," SEC spokesman Charles Bloom said. "But we can't tell you what might happen in the future. The SEC transition team gave its initial report to the athletic directors today and included in that were scheduling issues. One of the issues with a 13-team league is one division will have one more team than the other. How do you schedule around that? The league plans on keeping as many of the traditional rivalries as possible. It's too early to tell if some of the annual rivalries between West and East teams (LSU-Florida, Alabama-Tennessee) are vulnerable. A nine-game schedule (instead of the present eight) is a possible alternative. So is a 5-2-1 format."

The SEC is currently operating under a 5-1-2 scheduling format with each school playing its 5 division teams, 1 permanent opponent from the other division and two rotating opponents from

the other division. The SEC used a 5-2-1 format with two permanent opponents from the other division and one rotating from 1992 through 2001.

## **COMMENT: Welcome to the culture of fear in college sports**

By Harry Plumer

October 5, 2011 | 9:00 p.m. CDT

Are you scared yet? You should be. The "Tour de Fear" is coming to an athletic department near you.

Welcome to the new landscape of college sports, where a sad symphony of fear is officially playing at high volume.

It's been on repeat in Syracuse, N.Y., and Pittsburgh, Pa., for a couple of weeks now.

**After Tuesday's announcement that the UM System Board of Curators had delegated the power to explore options relating to athletic conference alignment to MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, you can go ahead and add Columbia to that playlist.**

In these uncertain days of conference realignment, schools have become so occupied with fighting off the grim reaper of irrelevance and financial instability that they have forgotten why college athletics exist in the first place.

One person remembers. Unfortunately, it's NCAA president Mark Emmert, who has as much say in the realignment process as you do.

"Nobody was talking about what this is going to do for student-athletes or intercollegiate athletic programs. It was all about let's make a deal," Emmert told the Associated Press on Sept. 28.

How did we get here?

It began in 1984, when the NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma lawsuit wrenched the power to control football television revenue away from the NCAA and gave it to the conferences. The NCAA became virtually powerless in the college football landscape, except when it chose to pop up and enforce its ever-burgeoning rulebook.

Not to say the NCAA is perfect. In fact, after reading Taylor Branch's "The Shame of College Sports" (a must-read for any college sports fan,) it's abundantly clear that the NCAA has enough problems to fill a few notebooks.

But at least the NCAA claims to have every school's best interests in mind. The conferences don't even do that. They exist only to create the greatest of financial windfalls for their members.

As maligned as the NCAA has been of late, in this case it's the benevolent governor, while the conferences are ruthless businessmen on a seemingly destructive rampage, willing to completely ignore the welfare of student-athletes and their families in a quest for the true American dream: Giant piles of cash.

Now, schools have become dependent on conferences to deliver the money they need to balance growing athletic budgets. When realignment finally ends, no school wants to be left without a major-conference home, both from a competitive standpoint — in terms of access to BCS bowl games — and from a financial standpoint.

That is the fear driving it all. What is an athletic department to do when the money, all of the sudden, isn't there?

With that in mind, can anyone blame Texas for grabbing all the cash it could with the Longhorn Network? Why should Texas be held to a different standard than the people who govern college football? It's just the most powerful, savvy constituent in a political system that seems more like infamously corrupt Tammany Hall every day.

Texas has the luxury of being in a position of strength. It enjoys a massive fan base that has made it nearly immune to the fear. Things like putting nearly 100,000 fans in a stadium for home games each week, and leading the country in merchandise sales for five years running will do that to a school's brand.

Texas, in fact, doesn't even really need a conference. Sure, the Longhorns would prefer to be in a league, but the Texas athletic department would certainly not go broke if Mack Brown and Co. were forced to go independent.

The majority of schools, including Missouri, are not in that position. Missouri is forced to work within this system. Because of that, it is forced to react to the epidemic of fear.

Missouri isn't the first school to make a move based on this, either. The most obvious fear-based moves so far are the departures of Syracuse and Pittsburgh from the Big East. Those schools were terrified, and rightfully so, that the Big East wouldn't exist much longer. So their athletic directors did what any self-respecting athletic director in 2011 would do: To cover their butts, they stabbed Big East Commissioner John Marinatto in the back along with their longtime colleagues at West Virginia, Rutgers et al.

You can spin Missouri's latest movement any way you want. Tiger fans can say MU is "standing up to Texas," and that it's tired of being pushed around, but in reality Deaton and Missouri athletic director Mike Alden are making sure that the school's budgetary posterior is covered if the still-unstable Big 12 collapses.

They can't be blamed for that. They are just doing their jobs. Deaton has to protect the welfare of the university and Alden has to make sure head football coach Gary Pinkel's next paycheck doesn't bounce.

As a pure fan, it would be a shame to see Missouri go south. Whatever miniscule chance the Tigers have of winning a football national title (or even a conference title) becomes even more miniscule in the uber-loaded SEC. We don't know whether the rivalry with Kansas would continue. It could, but what if Kansas decides it doesn't want to chalk up what has become, more often than not, an L on the schedule?

But as an objective observer, leaving the Big 12 is the only move Missouri can make to do what it's been forced to do by the system that exists: Cover its butt, and secure the future.

After Tuesday, that future is Chancellor Deaton's to explore.

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## SEC officials say focus is on 13-team schedule

By JOHN ZENOR, The Associated Press

October 5, 2011 | 7:42 p.m. CDT

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — SEC athletic directors and Commissioner Mike Slive met Wednesday to discuss the logistics of Texas A&M's entry as the 13th member even though No. 14 might soon be on its way.

**The meeting comes a day after UM System curators voted unanimously to consider leaving the Big 12 — likely to join the Southeastern Conference — instead of committing to the league for the long term.**

However, SEC spokesman Charles Bloom said the AD meeting at league headquarters was scheduled several weeks ago and was "to integrate Texas A&M into the Southeastern Conference and plan for a 13-team schedule for all sports in 2012-13."

SEC school administrators have indicated that adding a 14th school is likely, perhaps imminent. And though the vote by Missouri curators makes the Tigers a leading contender, Mississippi State athletic director Scott Stricklin said the conference is in a wait-and-see mode on further expansion. He said there were no discussions about a 14th team on Wednesday.

"The commissioner has done such a great job of positioning us, and we continue just to kind of look for his guidance and for him to lead us in whatever direction we decide on," Stricklin said. "When he says, 'Hey, here's an idea,' we're going to listen to him.

"Until then, I think we are all very comfortable with where we are at 13 for the time being."

Mississippi AD Pete Boone said a 14-team schedule would be preferable, but he and his peers focused on a 13-team schedule because that's how many schools they have right now.

"Certainly, we've discussed that conceptually, it would be nice to have a 14-team league and to have a 14-team league sooner rather than later," Boone said. "But I don't believe anything is imminent at this time."

Other athletic department staffers and the transition team formed after Texas A&M's admission into the league also participated in the four-hour meeting in a conference room in the downtown Birmingham offices.

"It was just about the schedule going forward and how we integrate what we've got," Stricklin said. "We're still excited about Texas A&M and what they bring to the table.

"As the commissioner has said, we anticipate being a 13-team league next year, and we want to make sure we have a plan in place that's fair and equitable."

Stricklin said the transition team presented ideas and got feedback, but there wasn't a vote or decision on scheduling or division setups.

"Any time you start talking about schedules, you want to make sure there's fairness involved and that rivalries where we can be protected," he said. "We've got such a great league, every matchup is a good matchup. It really doesn't matter who you play. Mainly just make sure we keep the ideas of as much balance as you can. I think we've done that traditionally as a league, and I didn't hear anything today that made me think we weren't going to go in that direction."

Slive has said he would prepare to go into next year as if there will be 13 teams, which would create unbalanced divisions. As for adding a 14th, he has emphasized that the SEC would be "strategic and thoughtful" in expansion, but shed little light otherwise on the league's plans.

Several athletic directors declined comment or referred questions to Slive.

"We can't talk about it," Florida AD Jeremy Foley said. "We were talking about A&M."

Nonetheless, there has been plenty of talk about a 14th team.

South Carolina President Harris Pastides has said he doesn't "think 13 is a sustainable number, but I think 14 is." He added that he doesn't advocate growing to a 16-team league.

Tennessee athletic director Dave Hart has also previously said the SEC will expand again but that members need to be deliberate in taking that next step.



## MU helps give dog new leash on life

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Wednesday, October 5, 2011

For years, Connie Miller watched one of her little Yorkshire terriers struggle to breathe.

Jack would wheeze, cough and retreat to a den away from his owners and other dogs. "We felt really helpless," she said.

Jack's a sweet dog, Miller said, but for the past three or four years, he's suffered from tracheal collapse. The Millers tried various treatments but without much success.

**Then this summer, Jack, who is 12, had back to back spells where he could not breathe and started turning blue. Both times she took him to the University of Missouri Veterinary Hospital.**

That's where she learned about a unique procedure the hospital offers for tracheal problems commonly found in toy breed dogs.

Veterinarians insert a flattened, spring-like stent into the trachea, where it then opens, forcing the windpipe to expand, said Carol Reiner, an associate professor of small animal internal medicine who led the team that performed the procedure.

There's risk involved, mainly because it requires general anesthesia, but the operation is not that uncommon for the vet hospital. MU's animal hospital — which Reiner said likely is the only one in the state offering the procedure — has done four this year.

"The procedure that Jack received is generally considered a last-ditch effort," Reiner said. "It takes a great deal of planning and precision. But its success can be seen — and heard — almost immediately."

The Millers didn't hesitate to give veterinarians the go-ahead when they learned of the operation.

"When we took him in the last time, we were afraid they were going to tell us he was going to have to be put to sleep," Miller said. "We were relieved to have another option."

Just a couple of days after the August surgery, Jack was a new dog.

“It’s really like he’s been given a new lease on life,” Miller said. “He’s active. He loves it outside — he spends a good part of the day outside. He’s just really healthy and breathing. We’re relieved and we’re sure he’s relieved.”