

## Big Ten, Pac-12 cancel fall football seasons

Conferences' decisions also include delay of other fall sports

By **Ralph Russo**  
Associated Press

A crumbling college football season took a massive hit Tuesday, Aug. 11, as the Big Ten and Pac-12, two historic and powerful conferences, succumbed to the pandemic and canceled their fall football seasons.

Five months almost to the day after the first spikes in coronavirus cases in the U.S. led to the cancellation of the NCAA basketball tournaments, the still raging pandemic is tearing down another American sports institution: fall Saturdays filled with college football.

"This was an extremely difficult and painful decision that we know will have important impacts on our student-athletes, coaches, administrators and our fans," Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott said. "We know nothing will ease that."

Despite pleas from players, coaches and President Donald Trump in recent days to play on, 40% of major college football teams have now decided to punt on a fall season, a decision that will cost schools tens of millions of dollars and upends traditions dating back a century.



In this Dec. 6, 2019, file photo, Oregon safety Jevon Holland (8) breaks up a pass for Utah wide receiver Jaylen Dixon (25) during the first half of the Pac-12 Conference championship NCAA college football game in Santa Clara, California. Both the Pac-12 and Big Ten on Tuesday, Aug. 11, announced they were canceling the fall football season.

Tony Avelar/AP file photo

Both conferences cited the risk of trying to keep players from contracting and spreading the coronavirus when the programs are not operating in a bubble like the NBA and NHL are doing. They also cited the broader state of the pandemic in the United States, which has had more than 5 million cases of COVID-19.

"Every life is critical," first-

year Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren told AP. "We wanted to make sure we continually, not only in our words but in our actions, do put the health and safety and well-being of our student-athletes first."

Two smaller conferences, the Mid-American and Mountain West, had already announced the uncertain move to spring football. The decisions by the deep-pock-

eted Big Ten and Pac-12, with hundred million-dollar television contracts and historic programs, shook the foundation of college sports.

What's next?

The Southeastern Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference released statements expressing cautious optimism. The Big 12 was conspicuously quiet, at least

publicly. Outside the Power Five conferences, the American Athletic Conference, Conference USA and Sun Belt made no immediate moves.

"Everyone is going to make their independent decisions and I certainly respect our colleagues," Scott said. "We try to be very collaborative, communicative with our peers across the country. But at the end of the day, our presidents and chancellors looked at what was in best interest of Pac-12 student-athletes based on the advice and frankly what's going on in our communities."

The Big Ten said it was postponing all fall sports and hoping to make them up in the second semester. An hour later, the Pac-12, the Big Ten's Rose Bowl partner, said all sports would be paused until Jan. 1, including basketball.

Players around the country were stunned. Many had recently taken to social media with the hashtag We Want to Play. Ohio State star quarterback Justin Fields was among the players trying to present a unified front and save their season, but it didn't matter.

After the announcement, Fields simply posted to Twitter: "smh," short for shaking my head.

"Our lives are changing forever right before our eyes," Arizona offensive lineman Donovan Laie tweeted.

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