

Sports

Pac-12, Big 10: No fall football

By **Ralph D. Russo**
AP College Football Writer

A crumbling college football season took a massive hit Tuesday when 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.

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 the AP. “We wanted to make sure we continually, not only in our words but in our actions, do put the health and safety and wellness 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-pocketed 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



Sean Meagher /The Oregonian/OregonLive

The Oregon Ducks face the Oregon State Beavers in the 122nd Civil War at Reser Stadium in Corvallis in November 2018. The schools won’t play their annual rivalry game this fall, as the Pac-12 Conference announced Tuesday that fall sports were canceled.

“We feel good about our decision.”

— **Michael Schill, president, University of Oregon**

expressing cautious optimism. The Big 12 was quiet, but a person familiar with the conference’s discussions told The Associated Press the league was continuing to work toward playing in the fall. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the conference was not planning to make its internal discussions public.

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

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 #WeWanttoPlay. Ohio State star quarterback Justin Fields was among those trying to present a unified front and save their season.

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.

Less than a week ago, the Big Ten — which includes perennial powers such as Ohio State, Michigan, Nebraska and Penn State — had released a revised conference-only football schedule it hoped would help it navigate a fall season filled with potential COVID-19 disruptions.

Even after the Big Ten made its call, there were diverging thoughts about how it should have proceeded.

Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said he would have liked to have pushed back the season from Sept. 5 to maybe early October.

“Wish we could have had a little bit more time to evaluate, but we certainly understand this was the time we had to pull the plug,” Smith told the Big Ten network.

A statement from Nebraska’s president, athletic director and coach was more stern: “We are very disappointed in the decision by the Big Ten Conference to postpone the fall football season, as we have been and continue to be ready to play.”

In the Pac-12, where Southern California, Oregon, Washington and Stanford have won championships in recent years, there seemed to more consensus.

“We feel good about our decision,” Oregon President Michael Schill said. “We would have made this decision independent of the Big Ten. We’re pleased they are joining us.”

The cost of losing football will be devastating to athletic departments. The Big Ten distributed more than \$50 million to most of its members in 2018, but most of that came from media rights deals and a conference TV network powered by football. Maybe some can be recouped in the spring, but there are bills to pay now.

Wisconsin of the Big Ten has estimated \$100 million in losses with no football at all. Michigan said it could be in the red more than that.

“We do have a reserve that will take us so far, but we’re going to have to have some layoffs,” Wisconsin athletic director Barry Alvarez said.

Lillard ties career-high 61 as Blazers nip Mavericks

■ **Portland can clinch a berth in play-in series by beating Brooklyn**

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Damian Lillard is simply willing the Portland Trail Blazers toward the postseason.

The veteran guard tied a career high with 61 points, leading the Blazers to a 134-131 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday night that moved his team into eighth place in the Western Conference.

“Ain’t nothing I want more,” Lillard said of the playoffs. “When I came here (to Disney World) I told them I’m not here to waste my time. Our work ain’t done yet but we’re fighting for it.”

The Blazers will clinch a spot in the play-in series with a win Thursday against Brooklyn.

“We have to come out with the same mentality,” Lillard said. “We control our own destiny. That’s the most important game of our lives.”

Lillard joined Wilt Chamberlain as the only players with three 60-point games in a season. Coach Terry Stotts said his guard has been extra focused since missing two late free throws in a loss to the Clippers on Saturday.

“He’s showing a lot of resolve,” Stotts said. “Nobody wanted to come into this bubble and make the playoffs more than Dame. We have one more game to go, but his leadership and his game speaks for itself. But he’s bringing the team along with him.”

Kristaps Porzingis scored 36 points before fouling out late in the game and Luka Dončić had 25 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Mavericks, who will finish No. 7 in the West.

Lillard made nine 3-pointers in his sixth 50-point game of the season. He’s the 12th player in NBA history to score 50 points in back-to-back games after dropping 51 on the 76ers on Sunday.

He scored in every way imaginable, from well beyond the 3-point line, on blow-by drives, short jumpers and at the foul line. Lillard finished 17 of 32 from the floor and 9 of 17 from beyond the arc while making all 18 free throw attempts.

“Damian played incredible,” Porzingis said. “Made some unbelievable shots. Hats off to him.”

DREAM HOME

Electrical By:
Eastern Oregon Electric, Inc.
Brent Joseph, owner
CCB 151441
541-523-9176

1

Insurance from

Gregg Hinrichsen
1722 Campbell
541-523-7778

2

Lumber by:
Miller’s Lumber & Truss
Lighting & Cabinets
3815 Pochontas
541-523-6404

3

Vinyl Windows by:
NeHi Enterprises
2122 10th Street
541-523-6008
ccb#155399

4

Paper Delivered by
Baker City Herald
PO Box 807
541-523-3673
Call to have your home related business added to this ad monthly

5

Garage Door by:
NeHi Enterprises
2122 10th Street
541-523-6008
ccb#155399

6

Storage Building from
Countryside Sheds
www.countrysidesheds.com
Shop Display:
10102 S. McAlister Rd., Island City
800-682-0589 • 541-663-0246
(across from D&B Supply)

7

Roof By:
D&H Roofing & Construction Inc.
Locally owned & operated
Baker City • 541-524-9594
CCB 192854

8

Do you have a business to help our readers build or maintain a “dream” home?
Call 541-523-3673 to ask about advertising in this space!