

USC, UCLA to leave Pac-12 for Big Ten in 2024

The move makes the Pac-12's future uncertain, affecting Oregon and Oregon State

BY RALPH D. RUSSO AND ERIC OLSON
AP College Sports Writers

In a surprising and seismic shift in college athletics, the Big Ten voted Thursday, June 30 to add Southern California and UCLA as conference members beginning in 2024.

The expansion to 16 teams will happen after the Pac-12's current media rights contracts with Fox and ESPN expire and make the Big Ten the first conference to stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The announcement, which caught the Pac-12 off-guard, came almost a year after Oklahoma and Texas formally accepted invitations to join the Southeastern Conference in July 2025.

Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren said USC and UCLA, both members of the Pac-12 and its previous iterations for nearly a century, submitted applications for membership and the league's Council of Presidents and Chancellors voted unanimously to add the Los Angeles schools.



Allen J. Schaben/Los Angeles Times-TNS, File

UCLA quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson hurdles high over USC safety Chase Williams, left, and cornerback Isaac Taylor-Stuart as he scores a touchdown on the play in the fourth quarter at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, in Los Angeles, on Nov. 20, 2021.

"Ultimately, the Big Ten is the best home for USC and Trojan athletics as we move into the new world of collegiate sports," USC athletic director Mike Bohn said. "We are excited that our values align with the league's member institutions. We also will benefit from the stability and strength of the conference; the athletic caliber of Big Ten institutions; the increased visibility, exposure, and resources the conference will bring our student-athletes and programs; and the ability to expand engagement with our

passionate alumni nationwide."

The Big Ten is building on previous expansion into the nation's largest media markets, and the move allows the conference to keep pace with the SEC as one of the most powerful entities in college sports.

The Big Ten will gain blue-blood programs in football (USC) and basketball (UCLA) and big-name brands that will enhance the value of the conference's new media rights package currently being negotiated.

Losing flagship schools like USC and UCLA is a major

Oregon's future yet to be decided

EUGENE — UCLA and USC heading to the Big Ten, the future of the Pac-12 is in doubt and Oregon's place in the looming shuffle is unclear.

Will the Ducks remain in the Pac-12? Will they join the Los Angeles schools and bolt to the Big Ten?

Asked for a response to reports about UCLA and USC and whether University of Oregon president Michael Schill has engaged in talks with Big Ten commissioner Kevin Warren or anyone else in that conference for Oregon to do the same, a UO spokeswoman told The Oregonian/OregonLive there was, "Nothing to add at this point."

Later Thursday afternoon, June 30, a UO athletics spokesman replied with the same message in response to whether Oregon athletic director Rob Mullens has engaged in conversations with Warren or the Big Ten.

The Pac-12's grant of rights expires on Aug. 1, 2024, with UCLA and USC officially joining the Big Ten the next day. Multiple reports suggest the conference could be looking to expand to more than 16 teams.

Schill's two-year term as chair of the Pac-12's executive committee comes to an end on Thursday.

—oregonlive.com

blow to the Pac-12, which has had a long and amicable relationship with the Big Ten best exemplified by its Rose Bowl partnership.

"While we are extremely surprised and disappointed by the news coming out of UCLA and USC today, we have a long and storied history in athletics, academics, and leadership in supporting student-athletes that we're confident will continue to thrive and grow into the future," the Pac-12 said in

a statement.

The Pac-12's next move is unknown, but adding schools to replace USC and UCLA is a possibility.

"We look forward to partnering with current and potential members to pioneer the future of college athletics together," the Pac-12 said.

The Big Ten has expanded twice in recent years, with Nebraska joining in 2011 and Maryland and Rutgers in 2014.

USC and UCLA fit the Big Ten's academic profile. Both schools are among the 65 members of the Association of American Universities, which is made up of top research universities. All Big Ten schools except Nebraska are members.

"From increased exposure and a broader national platform for our student-athletes, to enhanced resources for our teams, this move will help preserve the legacy of UCLA Athletics for generations to come," UCLA athletic director Martin Jarmond said.

"We have deeply valued our membership in the Pac-12, and we have great respect for the conference and our fellow member institutions, but each school faces its own unique challenges and circumstances. We believe this is the right move for UCLA at the right time."

USC and UCLA stand to significantly increase their revenues. The Pac-12 distributed only \$19.8 million per school in fiscal year 2021, by far the least among Power 5 conferences. The Big Ten's per-school distribution was \$46.1 million, second only to the SEC's \$54.6 million.

The Pac-12 has had difficulty getting its conference television network untracked while the Big Ten Network

See **Big Ten** / A6

Blazers agree to \$28 million deal with Gary Payton II

BY AARON FENTRESS
oregonlive.com

PORTLAND — The first day NBA teams could begin negotiating with free agents almost came and went Thursday, June 30 with the Portland Trail Blazers reportedly finalizing just one deal.

But later Thursday night, hours after agreeing to a contract extension with Anfernee Simons, the Blazers agreed to a three-year deal with guard Gary Payton II that will pay him \$28 million, a source confirmed to The Oregonian/OregonLive.

Shams Charania of The Athletic first reported the news.

Payton, 29, the son of Oregon State legend Gary Payton, adds backcourt depth and versatility as a defender. Payton II, who also played at Oregon State, averaged 7.1 points in 17.6 minutes per game for the Warriors during their run to the NBA title.

The Blazers, as expected, signed guard Simons to a four-year, \$100 million contract extension soon after things began popping around the league at 3 p.m. The Blazers retaining Simons, a restricted free agent, was a

virtual given and the franchise didn't even wait to allow one team to sign the 2018 first-round pick to an offer sheet.

After that, all was quiet on the Blazers' front until the news about Payton hit.

The 6-foot-3 Payton is a great success story. He had a stellar career with the Beavers but went undrafted in 2016. He played summer league with Houston that year and appeared in six preseason games before being waived in October, 2016. He then appeared in 18 regular-season games over two seasons with Milwaukee (2016-2018)

before playing 11 games with the LA Lakers (2017-18) and then 32 over two seasons with Washington (2018-2020). Two seasons ago he caught on with Golden State and saw action in 10 games.

Last season, Payton II's career took off and he became a valuable player off the bench for the Warriors. During the NBA Finals against Boston, Payton averaged 7.0 points and 3.2 rebounds off the bench.

The Blazers' starting backcourt will consist of Simons and Damian Lillard. Payton is versatile enough and defen-

sive-minded enough to see time at point guard, shooting guard and small forward.

Payton II had a defensive rating of 102.3 last season and 101.1 the prior season.

Adding another guard, especially of the 6-3 variety, is a bit puzzling. The Blazers also have the 6-5 Josh Hart on the roster. He plays shooting guard and small forward. The 6-5 Nassir Little will also be in the mix at small forward. Then there is 6-6 rookie guard Shaedon Sharpe, selected with the No. 7 pick in last week's NBA draft.

New golf tour tees off in Oregon amid criticism

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

NORTH PLAINS — The Saudi Arabia-backed LIV Golf tour's second event teed off Thursday, June 30 near Portland, angering a group of families who lost loved ones on Sept. 11 and want the Saudi government held to account for the terrorist attacks.

About 10 family members and survivors spoke at a small park honoring veterans in tiny North Plains, home to Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club.

"This event is nothing more than a group of very talented athletes who appear to have turned their backs on the crime of murder," said survivor Tim Frolich, who was injured in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

The LIV Golf series, funded by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, was making its first stop on American soil this week after a debut this month outside of London.

Carlos Ortiz took the lead Thursday with a 5-under 67. Dustin Johnson, the 2020 Masters winner, was a shot back. Pat Perez, Brenden Grace and Hideto Tadihara were two shots off the lead.

"You need to get off to a good start and obviously stay with it because there's no real letting up," Perez said about the 54-hole format. "Every shot, I think, means a little bit more."

The upstart series, fronted by CEO Greg Norman, aims to challenge the PGA Tour and has lured players with big signing bonuses and rich prize purses. But critics call the tour an attempt at "sportswashing" to detract from Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses, including the murder of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Locally, opponents point to the 2016 hit-and-run death of 15-year-old Fallon Smart. The Saudi national accused in the case cut off a monitoring device shortly before his trial and vanished. U.S. officials believe he was spirited home by the Saudi government.

And then there's the Sept. 11 families, who have reached out to some of the individual golfers involved in the tour but have not been granted an audience. The group produced an ad that has run on local television.

"These golfers that are get-

ting in bed with the Saudis, they should know what they're doing. Shame on them. And to the golfers that say it's just a game of golf: Shame on them," said Brett Eagleson, the head of the group 9/11 Justice, who lost his father at the World Trade Center. "I invite them to live with the pain in our eyes, hear our stories and walk in our shoes, hear what we have to say about the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

At Pumpkin Ridge there was a noticeable police and security presence, including officers at the front gate. There were rumors of a designated protest area in one of the parking lots, but no one was sure where it was. Tickets to the event warned fans could not display political signs.

Phil Mickelson, a six-time major winner and a top draw on the tour, had one of the bigger galleries on opening day. He was playing in a group with Charl Schwartzel, who lost his ball on his first drive of the day. Fans along the fairway said they believed it landed in a tree.

"In this area there aren't many chances to see these guys in person," spectator Will

Knowles said. "I'm staying out of the politics."

Because the event was played on two courses, it was difficult to get a handle on crowd sizes and LIV Golf did not disclose attendance figures.

For golfers, part of LIV Golf's allure is the money. In addition to sizable signing bonuses, the 48-man field is competing for a \$20 million purse, with an additional \$5 million prize fund for a team competition. Schwartzel won the London event (and team portion) and made \$4.75 million.

There's no cut and even the last-place finisher earns a payday of \$120,000. Organizers promise exciting events they say will attract new fans: With a shotgun start and Rihanna blaring out of a massive sound system near the putting green, the tournament indeed had a different vibe.

In addition to Mickelson, who shot a 75, fellow majors winners Johnson, Brooks Koepka (70) and Bryson DeChambeau (72) have also joined LIV — which rhymes with "give" — and plays on the Roman numerals for 54.

DISTRICT 3 LITTLE LEAGUE ALL-STAR BASEBALL TOURNAMENT



Contributed Photo

Baker's minor boys all-star baseball team finished second in the District 3 tournament at Burns on June 30, 2022.

Baker takes 2nd at district tournament

Baker City Herald

BURNS — Baker's minors boys all-star baseball team came up one game short at the District 3 Little League tournament in Burns, losing 19-3 to Columbia in the championship game on Thursday, June 30.

Columbia forced a winner-takes-all game with a 20-8 win over previously unbeaten Baker earlier in the day.

Baker's roster includes Soren Kaaen, Emmett

Petrucci, Wyatt Hansen, Ryker Davis, Welker Benson, Easton Ashby, Turner Jobs, Hoyt Bachman, Ryker Albert, Steven Kaesemeyer, Nolan Simpson, Jace Svedin and Kai Barr. Kris Davis is the team's manager.

Three other Baker all-star teams also placed second at the district tournament — majors girls softball, junior girls softball, and junior boys baseball.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Moreno scores twice, Timbers hold off Dynamo

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Santiago Moreno scored a pair of goals in the space of two minutes in the first half and the Portland Timbers hung on to beat the Houston Dynamo 2-1 on Wednesday night, June 29.

Darwin Quintero scored a second-half goal for the Dynamo, who have not won in Portland since 2011.

"We had a amazing first half. And then we have to always make it hard for ourselves. You know, we are our own worst enemy," Portland goalkeeper Aljaz Ivacic said. "Instead of putting (the) game away 3-0 or 4-0, it was 2-1 and then we struggled at the end. But the most important is that we got the win and that's it."

Yimmi Chara was brought

See **Timbers** / A6

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