

Big Ten divisions announced (updated)

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Iowa AD Gary Barta reacts to Wednesday's announcement of Big Ten divisions

The Big Ten divisions for football in 2011 and beyond are out, and to the delight of Iowa athletics director Gary Barta, it worked out as well as he had hoped for the Hawkeyes.

While the two divisions haven't been named yet, Iowa does know now who it will be in a division with, as well as its 2011 and 2012 schedules, all of which were formally announced by the Big Ten on Wednesday.

The Hawkeyes will play in a division with Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Northwestern. From Barta's perspective, it worked out well in the sense that Iowa kept two of its three main rivals.

"If you go back from the very beginning, if you had told me it would have turned out the way it did, I don't know that we

could have come out with a better outcome for the Big Ten, but also from Iowa's perspective," Barta said outside Carlos O'Kelly's in Iowa City shortly after an appearance on "Hawk Talk with Kirk Ferentz." "I think it accomplishes everything we would like it to."

As a result, however, the Hawkeyes' rivalry with Wisconsin (which had been protected) will no longer be annual. Iowa's 2011 and 2012 schedules will feature interdivisional games against Indiana, Penn State, and Purdue. The Hawkeyes and Boilermakers will be "protected" rivals, meaning they will always play every season under this new format.

There is a bit of irony here, as Iowa and Purdue do not play each other in 2010.

As for why the divisions weren't split right down the middle geographically, Barta said "it was never going to work out that way."

"We put everything on the table. We talked about everything," Barta added. "But quickly, we realized it was probably going to have to split, not just East to West, not just North to South, but a mixture of balance."

In addition to Wisconsin no longer being in Iowa's near future, neither will Illinois nor Ohio State. As a matter of fact, the Hawkeyes and Fighting Illini will now go the entire first term of President Barack Obama's presidency without facing each other. Illinois won the last meeting on Nov. 1, 2008, three days before Obama was elected.

Barta also announced the Hawkeyes' non-conference slates through 2014 should not be affected by the changes in scheduling. This is important to note because Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany stated the earliest that the conference would pursue a ninth game would be in 2015.

As far as the Big Ten schedules look, Iowa will have a bye

week in 2011 before opening conference play on Oct. 8 of that year against Penn State. The Hawkeyes will then play four of five at home before finishing the season with two straight road games against Purdue and Nebraska.

Iowa and Nebraska will meet in the season finales of both 2011 and 2012.

"We continue to look forward to the inclusion of Nebraska into the Big Ten and we, as Hawkeyes, look forward to competing with them every year," Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said in a statement released Wednesday.

The Hawkeyes will open Big Ten play in 2012 with Minnesota at home in the battle for Floyd of Rosedale after playing two straight against the Golden Gophers at TCF Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

Barta also took the time to mention what he considered "misinformation" being sent around nationally about the Big Ten looking into preserving competitive balance by splitting Ohio State and Penn State apart from Michigan and Nebraska. Those four programs are in the top seven for all-time victories in Division-I.

"We got great consideration in this whole process," Barta said. "We had equal voice. It was a transparent and open discussion. It was great discussion.

"I never once felt like somehow, Iowa was being left out. Somebody asked me that about two or three weeks ago, and I was sort of puzzled by the comment because that just isn't the case."

The final result may not be what some Hawkeye fans were hoping for, but both Barta and Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany feel the best interests of the conference as a whole have been met.

"While we understand that no final alignments could possibly

satisfy all of our constituents, we believe that we have achieved a very exciting result," Delany said in a statement released by the Big Ten on Wednesday.

[Iowa's complete 2011 and 2012 schedules](#)