

5/17/2011: Big Ten spring meetings notebook

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

CHICAGO, Ill. – As anticipated, the possibility of a nine-game conference schedule was one of numerous hot-button issues addressed Tuesday as the Big Ten conducted the first day of its two-day spring meetings at the Palmer House Hilton.

Iowa athletics director Gary Barta said following the morning portion of the meetings there was no vote on nine-game schedules when athletics directors and football coaches got together, but that it's a topic that continues to be discussed.

"To the credit of our conference, it has not been a bigger stadium versus smaller stadium discussion. It has been what's in the best interests of the Big Ten conference," Barta said. "There are pros and cons I think in the revenue share question, but at the end of the day, I think we're trying to figure out what makes the Big Ten conference strongest from a football perspective, so I think is what has been focused on."

One thing Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany did reveal Tuesday while speaking to reporters is that the No. 1 priority that would come with incorporating a nine-game conference schedule should it happen is ensuring all 12 Big Ten programs they would be able to play seven home games each season.

Regardless of whether or not an additional conference game is added to future schedules, Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz said he'd live with whichever direction the Big Ten chooses to go.

"I don't think my opinion is going to matter that much

anyway," Ferentz said. "If we end up going to nine, we'll play that, and if we don't, we'll play eight."

Ferentz updates on Robinson, Lowe and Rogers

Any previous thoughts of Adam Robinson returning to the Iowa football team no longer exist. Ferentz confirmed Tuesday that the former running back, who was dismissed from the team one week after an arrest of charges of marijuana possession, would not be returning.

"He's going to be somewhere else," Ferentz said. "I don't know exactly what's going to happen, but he won't be with us."

Ferentz also gave an update on defensive back Willie Lowe, saying the senior will stay in school, but not be playing in 2011. Also discussed was fullback Brad Rogers, who missed all of spring practice while recovering from a heart condition that was discovered prior to the Hawkeyes' 2010 Insight Bowl match-up with Missouri last December.

"I think we're moving in the right direction, but we haven't gotten a final analysis on it," Ferentz said. "I've been told the longer it goes, the more positive it is as far as the tests they've done. We're hopeful he'll be able to return at some point during the summer months, but that's optimistically speaking."

Chicago, Indianapolis remain front-runners for future championships

Groups representing the cities of Chicago and Indianapolis, Ind., were on hand to advocate on their cities' behalves for hosting future Big Ten Championship games in football and Big Ten Tournaments in both men's and women's basketball.

Delany confirmed Tuesday that those are the only two cities that are currently in serious discussions with the Big Ten for being host sites for all three events. Right now, the 2011 Big

Ten Championship in football is slated for Dec. 3 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, and Conseco Fieldhouse (also in Indianapolis) is entering the fifth and final year of its current contract with the Big Ten to host both basketball tournaments.

There seems to be an difference of opinion among coaches directly in the two markets, but for slightly different reasons. Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald, who is originally from the Chicagoland area, wasn't hesitant voicing his support for Chicago's Soldier Field eventually hosting the title game.

He also made it clear that elements shouldn't be a factor.

"It's Big Ten football," Fitzgerald said. "That's all I'm going to say. I mean, we're playing a game the week before on our campuses. What's the difference?"

One coach who does believe it would be in the conference's best interests to keep the championship game in a controlled environment is Indiana's Kevin Wilson. In addition to being an advocate for Lucas Oil Stadium, which has a retractable roof, Wilson also spoke from experience having served as an assistant to Bob Stoops at Oklahoma prior to taking the Indiana job last winter.

"From a fan deal, and for the outcome of the game, I don't think you want elements to have significant control, although it is a part of our game," Wilson said. "There's always fairness in trying to move it around, some of the championship games haven't had good attendance. It would be tragic for this league not to have a game that wasn't a big-time sell-out."

Tressel on hand

The only head coaches not to make the trip to Chicago for this week's meetings were Ohio State basketball coaches Thad Matta (men's) and Jim Foster (women's). One Buckeye head coach that

was on hand after missing out last year was Jim Tressel, who will be suspended for Ohio State's first five contests of the 2011 football season.

Tressel granted an interview to one reporter as he walked back to his hotel room Tuesday, but the reporter had to follow him into the elevator going up in order to get questions in.

The ongoing events at Ohio State were brought up to coaches, as well as Delany. One Big Ten coach familiar with Tressel described him as being the way he typically is while meetings were taking place Tuesday.

"Adversity breeds success," said Michigan State head coach Mark Dantonio, who was Tressel's defensive coordinator at Ohio State when the Buckeyes won the national championship during the 2002-03 season. "I think we've all had adversity in our time, whether it's personal, whether it's team, whether it's professional, whatever it is. There's always going to be adversity, and it's how you handle those adverse situations.

"They're inevitably going to define you, and with that said, I have deep respect for him."

Meanwhile, Delany made clear he had nothing new to report beyond what facts are already known. Ohio State is scheduled to meet with the NCAA Infractions committee on Aug. 12.

"We'll go to the hearing, we'll answer the questions and present the case, and the NCAA will make a determination," Delany said. "That's the juncture at which time you'll be able to absorb exactly what it means sort of in the short or long term. But right now, to me, it's just talking about something well in advance.

"There are no new facts that I know of. It can be written about today, tomorrow, and the next day, and I'm sure it will, but there's not much for me to add other than to say that we have a hearing on Aug. 12 and that's where we'll be."

Iowa draws Clemson in the Big Ten/ACC Challenge

The match-ups for the 2011 Big Ten/ACC Challenge were released Tuesday afternoon, and the Hawkeyes will be drawing the Clemson Tigers for a game at Carver-Hawkeye Arena in Iowa City scheduled to take place on Nov. 29. This is the fifth confirmed game on Iowa's non-conference schedule for 2011-12, as the Hawkeyes are also taking part in an exempt tournament that features a game against Creighton at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines, as well as three home games against Campbell, Chicago State and North Carolina A&T.

Iowa's meeting with Clemson will mark just the third time the two schools have met, with the most recent contest taking place back in 1981. The Tigers went 22-12 last season and defeated UAB in the "First Four" before losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament to West Virginia.

Among the other match-ups taking place in this year's challenge include Ohio State hosting Duke, Wisconsin playing at North Carolina, Purdue hosting Miami, Michigan State hosting Florida State, Michigan traveling to Virginia and Illinois playing at Maryland.

****Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com on Wednesday for more coverage from the 2011 Big Ten spring meetings in Chicago, Ill.***