

Big Ten to play nine games starting in 2017

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The Big Ten conference has announced that beginning in 2017, all 12 teams will begin playing nine-game conference schedules. It will mark the first time since 1984 that the Big Ten would have nine league games.

In the release sent out by the conference Thursday morning, it was revealed that the Iowa Hawkeyes would be one of six teams that would receive five home games in league play during 2017, and then play five road games in 2018. The other five teams included Michigan State, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio State.

Nothing was stated in the Big Ten's release, however, about the additional game being a second "cross-protected" contest. Right now, Iowa has one such game that will be played each season against Purdue.

In a separate release sent out by Iowa, it was acknowledged by Iowa athletics director Gary Barta that the Big Ten worked around the Hawkeyes' annual rivalry with Iowa State and that "it appears it will go forward without interruption." As of now, the two teams are scheduled to meet at Jack Trice Stadium in September of 2017, which would give Iowa a fifth road game on top of the four Big Ten games the Hawkeyes would play away from Kinnick Stadium.

"There are positives and negatives, but in the end, everyone agrees this is the best way to go," Barta said.