

# Big Ten officially approves new divisions, 9-game schedule

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The Big Ten made new formats for football divisions and scheduling official Sunday afternoon as its Council of Presidents and Chancellors unanimously approved decisions of splitting divisions into an East and West and eventually going to a nine-game conference schedule in 2016.

According to the release sent out by the conference, the divisions will take effect next year when Maryland and Rutgers become official members. [As previously reported by ESPN last week](#), each division will feature seven teams with Iowa being placed in the West.

Starting next year, Iowa will play six games every season against Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Northwestern, Purdue and Wisconsin. The Hawkeyes will have two games against teams from the East division in 2014 and 2015, and then three opponents starting in 2016 when the schedule goes to nine games.

In the same release sent Sunday, Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany said six prior discussions were held by league athletics directors between the months of December and March. Maryland and Rutgers both announced their intentions to join the conference last November.

“The level of cooperation and collaboration was reflective of what we’ve come to expect from this group of administrators, who have worked extremely well together on a number of complex

matters over the past several years," Delany said in a statement. "We are all looking forward to ushering in this new era of Big Ten football."

Another key detail regarding the nine-game schedule is with the unbalance of four home games versus five home games. All teams in the East division will have five home games during every even-numbered year, starting with 2016, while every team in the West division gets five home games every odd-numbered year starting in 2017.

As that pertains to Iowa's annual game against Iowa State, the format allows the Hawkeyes to continue playing seven home games at Kinnick Stadium per season if they desire. Iowa is scheduled to play Iowa State at Kinnick Stadium in 2016 and then play at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames during the 2017 season, when the current deal on the rivalry is set to expire.