

University of Central Florida

STARS

---

On Sport and Society

Public History

---

8-20-2023

## Big 10

Richard C. Crepeau

University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu



Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [Other History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Commentary is brought to you for free and open access by the Public History at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Sport and Society by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Big 10" (2023). *On Sport and Society*. 892.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/892>

SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE - Big 10,12,14,16,18.....  
August 20, 2023

Over the past several weeks the world of college sports has gone into overdrive in an attempt to milk the public for as much cash as is humanly possible. The money game this time around has centered on conferences seeking to expand their membership, which mathematically means shrinking the size of the membership of other conferences or, even better, wiping out the conference competition entirely.

We know from past experience that nothing motivated the potentates of college sport more than an opportunity to increase revenues or, as Big 12 Commish Bret Yormark puts it, the guiding principle for us was "value creation." In the olden and more quaint times, this was known as increasing revenue streams or "fishing for dollars."

As the recent madness has unfolded, I found it nearly impossible to keep track of the changes; some of which just happened; some of which were set in place months or years ago and have just now been implemented; and some of which will take place one or two years down the road. In point of fact, my head is still spinning.

So, it might be time to ask a few simple questions. How many teams are in the Big 12? How many teams will be in the Big 12 next year? And how many teams will be in the Big 12 two years from now. If you can answer any of these questions correctly, you are indeed a true Big 12 fan. If you can answer two of three of these questions correctly, you are a Big 12 fanatic. If you can answer all three correctly, you are an AD at a Big 12 school. The correct answers will be somewhere between 12 and 20.

If you find this Big 12 quiz too difficult, you may want to stop here.

Next up is the Big Ten. How many teams are there in the Big Ten currently? When was the last time there were, in fact, ten teams in the Big Ten? How many will there be next year? Of the next year? Or even the next year?

The Big 12 and Big Ten stripped the Pac-12, once the Pac-10, of some of its members. Which teams left the Pac-12; where did they go; and how many teams are there remaining? How long will it take for the Pac-12 to disappear entirely? Is there any

numerically named conference that has the same number of members as their name suggests?

The Southeastern Conference has also grown over the past few years and will grow a bit more. Can you name the newest members and the next two members that will be added? Only the Atlantic Coast Conference will not expand next year, but the future is uncertain. There could, however, be some contraction in the ACC.

What is clear is that the winners, at least in some ways, are the Big 12 and Big Ten. It is said that these two conferences have "increased their footprints." Translated that means they will be the big revenue winners. Those involved in the decision-making processes of these conferences insist that all this movement is not about the money. That means, of course, that it *is* about the money. The Big 12 claims a "footprint" of some 90 million people, across four time zones. These are big shoes to fill.

The source of the money, as it is now in most every sport, is television, where the battle for eyeballs is also a battle for content. The increase in cable providers has now been intensified by the explosion in streaming services. The leader in the past decades in the cable world has been ESPN. There has been competition from others, including over-the-air networks, but ESPN has been dominant enough to have earned the nickname "the mothership."

All this has now changed. A week or so ago, it was announced that ESPN is losing money and becoming a drag on Disney profits. Streaming services are multiplying like rabbits, including those operated by conferences and universities. Demand for content has outstripped supply, and the winners are those who have content to sell. Those who control the most attractive content stand to make the biggest footprint. Thus, the pressure is on conferences to expand membership and make themselves a more attractive product.

None of this has much of anything to do with the traditional attractions of intercollegiate athletics such as conference or regional rivalries. Nor has any of this been restrained by geography. You may remember that at one point in baseball the National League **West** included Cincinnati and Atlanta. Now the Big Ten, once seen basically as a Midwestern entity, will stretch from coast to coast. What once was the Southwest Conference and became the Big 12 now has a national footprint stretching from Central Florida to Salt Lake City.

It is now estimated that the Big Ten will have annual revenues of \$1 Billion by 2024. In 2022, the Big Ten collected \$845.6M or nearly \$50M more than any other conference. This number, as well as the number for the Big 12, will increase over the next several years. Big 12 members now receive \$31M annually. The University of Florida's AD says that all this money is needed because of the rising cost of recruiting. And that is caused by ???

In addition, the demise of the Pac-12 means that there will be only four major conferences to contend for the potential twelve spots in an expanded national championship tournament which means more money to be divided among the winners of the expanded television contract for a playoff.

Someone has raised the question of whether an academic enterprise can survive in this hyper-commercial environment. It seems to me that this is no longer a relevant question as the academic environment has long since been diminished by the tsunami of dollars flowing across the ocean of college football and basketball. It is also likely that other sports will be following this model.

In the end it is not about the money; it is only about the limits of the money and who will get how much of it. Charley Brown only asked he get his "fair share." The current leaders of college sport, AD's, coaches and college presidents ask only for the largest share they can possibly get.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

Copyright 2023 by Richard C. Crepeau