

# Hear From B1G Commissioner Jim Delany and Coaches



The Big Ten Conference began its 48th annual Big Ten Media Days in Chicago Thursday morning, and commissioner Jim Delany and the 14 head football coaches took the podium to answer a range of questions on July 18-19.

Below is a brief recap of what they had to say:

## **Jim Delany - Big Ten Commissioner**

- Recognized former Big Ten Commissioner Wayne Duke.
- On new Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren: “Kevin is a smart, experienced executive.”
- Warren is going to be a great leader for the Big Ten conference.
- Internal culture of Big Ten is competitive.
- Competitors collaborate on issues ranging from equity to opportunity.
- The Big Ten has imported and exported great talent.
- Where do we go from here? Health and safety of our students.
- Biggest regret of a project that didn’t get completed? Serious mistakes in the 70s: loss of the four-year scholarship and freshman ineligibility.
- “I don’t know how Ohio State was ranked sixth last year. They were ranked sixth behind a conference runner-up.”
- Emphasis on player safety and concussion studies.
- “I wish students had more choice.”
- Clearly Alabama and Clemson have separated themselves and earned everything they’ve earned.
- Strength of schedule has not been adequately valued when it comes to the College Football Playoff.
- Big Ten football is right up there with the best.
- The constant churn of the College Playoff Committee is an issue.
- Wish we had more continuity among the CFP.
- Wish the schedules between different conferences were more similar.
- Would be great to have a Big Ten football game in Mexico.
- Does not think letting the public know who voted for who makes the CFP would be helpful.

## **Lovie Smith - Illinois**

- Proud of 2018 offensive production.
- Embraces having one of the worst defenses in college football, motivated to improve.
- Wants to be in the best position to be able to compete.
- Graduate transfers will help solidify young team.
- Improved depth on defense.
- The Big Ten West is getting tougher.
- Transfer portal? More transparency would help. Sometimes divorce is a good thing.
- Big Ten divisions set up? Like the way the divisions are set up. Good teams on both sides.

### **Scott Frost - Nebraska**

- “We’re going to go where the players are ... If they’re in Jamaica or Kazakhstan, so be it.”
- Wouldn’t trade quarterback Adrian Martinez for anybody in the country.
- We’re going to go as far as Martinez takes us this year.
- Excited about young team.
- Martinez is important leader and completely worthy of representing team as a sophomore.

### **Mark Dantonio - Michigan State**

- Transfer portal has been interesting. Have to recruit the portal, too. Fill needs via portal.
- Excited about Jalen Watts-Jackson
- I have not heard about league realignment but change is inevitable.
- Excited about sophomore safety/linebacker Xavier Henderson, a Pickerington, Ohio, Central product.
- On Urban Meyer: Did a tremendous job at Ohio State. Amazing what he did there.
- Very impressed with Ryan Day. Great success on football field, but also impressed with him as a person. Charismatic and down to earth. Look forward to competing against him.
- Jim Bollman is a long-time offensive line coach, great expertise.
- Put every assistant coach back to his area of expertise.
- Kenny Willekes: intense. Came in as linebacker, transitioned to tight end, then moved to defensive end and excelled. His story came true because of “dreams.”
- Willekes’ intensity is contagious.
- Sometimes you enjoy playing at home, Sometimes you enjoy playing on the road. That’s why they have the road games.
- Raequan Williams, a Chicago native, wants to be the mayor of Chicago: Great person, decided to return for senior year to finish degree.

### **Tom Allen - Indiana**

- Grit is the emphasis for the 2019 Hoosiers.
- Young and experienced team.
- Three quarterbacks capable of leading the team.
- Don’t play on running a two-quarterback system. Plan is to pick one and let him be the man.
- Big Ten division realignment are decisions I have nothing to do with.
- Faith and family are two most important things - that resonates with recruits.
- Offense will be new, not extremely different, but a different system.
- Stepping away from calling the defense will help him be a better head coach.

## **P.J. Fleck - Minnesota**

- Illinois is a huge recruiting state for Minnesota; Chicago is a big area for the Golden Gophers.
- Big Ten West is much improved.
- Minnesota is knocking walls down in recruiting.
- Zero easy games in the Big Ten. Have to be at your best every single week.
- Emphasis on improving in all aspects of life each day.
- Highest team GPA in program history, 3.2.
- Looks for great teachers when bringing in assistant coaches.
- "I'm a sixth-grade social studies teacher at heart."
- Joe Rossi took over as defensive coordinator, improved defense with excellent teaching.
- Rossi's teaching emphasized simplifying defense to help players play faster.

## **Michael Locksley - Maryland**

- Emphasis on building communal feel within program.
- "Maximize it" - be intentional with our behaviors. Be where your feet are.
- The Transfer Portal is a great opportunity to bolster the team with experienced talent.
- Strong relationship with Keandre Jones helped bring him in via the Transfer Portal.
- Keandre Jones' experience at Ohio State helps a young Maryland team.
- Keandre Jones has already become a leader through his work ethic.
- Learned from Nick Saban: "Consistency in your messaging."

## **Ryan Day - Ohio State**

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day wrapped up the first day of coaches' interviews. For a full recap, [click here](#).

## **Kirk Ferentz - Iowa**

- Embraces matchups with Nebraska.
- If he could change anything in his tenure, he would have hit recruiting harder in the past.
- Still sees recruiting as a challenge.
- Wants clarity on who gets immediate eligibility and who does not in the transfer process.
- "We should do what's best for the players."

## **Jeff Brohm - Purdue**

- Team needs to be more consistent.
- Markus Bailey, a Hilliard (Ohio) Davidson product, is incredibly important to us. Playmaker at linebacker. Activity, energy and approach makes him a good player and leader.
- Expressed excitement about wide receivers David Bell, Milton Wright and T.J. Sheffield (who all held offers from Ohio State).
- Rondale Moore is a special talent and works extremely hard. "We're going to get him the ball."
- Moore is a good student and can handle any advanced offensive schemes.
- Despite small senior class and young team, expectations are to win.
- Big Ten West is getting better every year.
- "In this conference you never know who is going to win."

- Some teams are going to be favored when they step on the field, but anyone can win.

### **James Franklin - Penn State**

- Proud of foundation built, looking to build off of it.
- "I love our conference. I think we do it the right way on and off the field. We compete at a high level."
- When you're left out of the playoffs in the last two years, there needs to be a discussion.
- "We're a great program, not an elite one" was misinterpreted.
- How do you become "elite" program? It's everything. Coaching, recruiting, everything. It's not one glaring area.
- Ninety percent of college football programs would like to be where we're at, but we need to take the next step.

### **Pat Fitzgerald - Northwestern**

- Walter Athletic Center, Wilson Field, Ryan Field - new facilities have helped in recruiting and player development.
- New offensive line coach Kurt Anderson has a WWE wrestler-type attitude.
- How do you defend Big Ten West title? There's a reason the rearview mirror is small and the windshield is big. If you get caught looking behind you, you'll be on a collision course to failure.
- "We've got to be more consistent. That starts and ends with me."
- Praised Jay Hooten, director of sports performance for football, for developing players physically through nutrition and strength training.
- Strength of schedule and conference champions should hold more weight when it comes to CFP.
- Will use low preseason rankings as motivation.
- "Stats are for losers."

### **Paul Chryst - Wisconsin**

- You have to take it week to week. Be in the moment and make the most of that moment.
- Every week in the Big Ten is so going to be a big game.
- You want your team to learn from its experiences and take those lessons and maximize the opportunity that is in front of you.
- Jonathon Taylor is really talented and a great running back.
- Taylor has been very impressive off the field ever since he came to campus. He continues to grow as a leader.
- Taylor cares a ton about the team and his teammates. He has stayed grounded despite the success.
- Graham Mertz has a great personality. He's handled the hype well. Unbelievable worker.
- Should players be allowed to leave college before the three required years to go to the NFL? Particularly a running back like Taylor who had so much success in two seasons.
- "It's hard to put an individual into a broad scope." If you look at large scope of it, they need time to prepare themselves for the NFL, not just mentally but physically.
- Excited about all four quarterbacks, position battle will happen during fall camp.

### **Chris Ash - Rutgers**

- More games are lost than they are won. It starts with me.
- Defensive line depth is strong, will allow team to rotate and keep pass rushers fresh.
- Linebacker depth is strongest on team.
- Big Ten conference realignment? I don't think you'll be able to realign the conference and make everybody happy.
- I like where the conference is now and I don't see it changing any time soon.
- Important to have John McNulty back as offensive coordinator. His knowledge of the players is helpful. When new offensive coordinators come in, they often try to implement their systems without much knowledge of the players.
- Excited about "stable of backs," including junior captain Raheem Blackshear.

## **Jim Harbaugh - Michigan**

- "I don't have all the answers to that. Maybe it would be something of you researching."
- How do you beat Ohio State and win the Big Ten? It starts with out goals. You named have of them, really. Win the Big Ten championship and go to the CFP.
- How has Coach Josh Gattis helped in recruiting? Quarterbacks Shea Patterson and Dylan McCaffery are playmakers. I've followed Coach Gattis since he was at Western Michigan and I like what he did there.
- I like our staff. It feels like you're locked arms with ten other guys and taking on the world.
- Coaching staff is in the best place it has been.
- Praised son Jay Harbaugh, Michigan's running back coach, saying he's one of the best young coaches he's been around in 35 years.
- Brandon Peters? He brings a lot to the table, he's 6-4, athletic, strong arm and a very sharp guy.
- Surprised Oliver Martin decided to transfer? Yes, he had a great spring and was atop our depth chart.
- It should be clear what the rules are for youngsters who are transferring.
- Every student-athlete should have a one-time ability to transfer and not have to sit out a year. Then, after that, the student-athlete would have to sit out a year of eligibility.
- Prefer to be picked at the top or the hunters? "That's where I would pick us."
- Why would you pick your team? I feel good about our team. It's tight and we're working on a daily basis to get tighter.
- How can your team live up the hype? Better discipline, better focus. Preparing on a day-to-day basis.
- What do you think about the possibility of traveling to Mexico City for a game. "We like travel. Mexico City would be great."
- The possibility of game planning against Brandon Peters Oct. 12? I said I wish him success, but that particular day, I won't be wishing him as much success.
- On comments about controversy following Urban Meyer: "No context you should know about. I don't think it was anything new or anything of a bombshell. It was things you all have understood and have written about."

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