

Notre Dame's Conference Decision In 2020 An Easy One, Per Notre Dame Editor



When the 2020 football schedules turned to conference-only schedules due to the ongoing concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was one major football program that appeared to have some problems ahead.

That program would be Notre Dame, the highest-ranked football program to not be in a conference the majority of seasons. This season, the Fighting Irish will be joining a conference, becoming a part of the ACC with a schedule that includes the likes of Clemson, Florida State, Louisville and North Carolina.

The wait is over.

More info » <https://t.co/yJUXpEhokA> pic.twitter.com/W3LJACMP8r

— ACC Football (@ACCFootball) August 6, 2020

Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with Lou Somogyi, senior editor at Blue and Gold Illustrated, about the decision to with the ACC over the Big Ten, a conference that has teams closer to Notre Dame's home in South Bend, Ind., both for this season and in football overall.

Somogyi said that the decision to join the ACC this year was an expected one considering the history that Notre Dame has had playing against opponents in the conference, even without joining entirely in the past.

"I was expecting it because when Notre Dame signed on with the ACC, I think there was kind of a tacit understanding if some of these unforeseen kind of events occur, and it's beneficial for both sides," Somogyi said. "It benefits (Notre Dame) as far as being able to compete for a conference championship and a playoff spot, and it benefits the ACC because now they're able to share television money, including NBC, you have a marquee name with Notre Dame added to the conference because I think among the Power Five conferences, it was ranked among the weakest because it's pretty much Clemson and then everybody else.

“There’s an incredible disparity between Clemson and the rest of the league. Notre Dame at least helps close some of that.”

The Big Ten has went to a conference-only schedule this season - the ACC has one nonconference game - and is starting games nine days sooner than the ACC, with Ohio State set to take on Illinois on Sept. 3.

The football schedule starts as early as the weekend of Sept. 5 with final games slated for Nov. 21 to align with academic calendars. The Big Ten Football Championship Game remains scheduled for Dec. 5 at Lucas Oil Stadium, though it could be moved as late as Dec. 19.
pic.twitter.com/vWp3OSifBc

— Big Ten Conference (@bigten) August 5, 2020

Despite being closer geographically to the Big Ten football programs, Somogyi said it is likely that the Big Ten would not have let Notre Dame into the conference this season even if the Fighting Irish wanted to join, and it’s for the same reasons that Notre Dame went to the ACC initially.

“I think Notre Dame had also been looking at the Big Ten because they needed to find a home after the Big East disbanded. They needed to find a home for, not football necessarily, but for the basketball teams and lacrosse and tennis and volleyball and soccer and baseball and everything else,” Somogyi said. “With the Big Ten, it was like ‘Yes, you can join and we’d love you, but you’ve got to be in some football full time too,’ and that was kind of a deal breaker.

“The ACC, I guess maybe for the lack of a better term, had more of an open marriage. We could be married, but I guess you can still date around and have your freedom there, and Notre Dame saw it as the best of both worlds, they have a perfect landing spot for the basketball and other olympic sports, but at the same time they can also maintain their football independence while agreeing to play, it’s been anywhere from 4-6 ACC games per year.

“I think the Big Ten would have told Notre Dame to go pound sand to say ‘Hey, can you let us in the conference?’ No, you either join full time or we don’t play ball, whereas with the ACC, it’s like they’re already a partial member and it’s like ‘Hey, this is beneficial for both sides.’”

Somogyi said that this season is just a temporary solution, and does not mean that Notre Dame will necessarily be looking to join the ACC as a full-time member.

But, with the Fighting Irish having games scheduled against five ACC opponents through the 2037 season, it is not likely that the football team will be moving toward the Big Ten any time soon.

“The Big Ten is just not in the mix,” Somogyi said, “and I wouldn’t blame them if they said ‘If you want the ring on your finger, you don’t date other women.’”

Photo Credit: Notre Dame Athletics

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