

**Headline:** BCS-Coalition Press Conference Call Transcript

Nov. 16, 2003

6 p.m. Central Time

**Operator:** Thank you for standing by and welcome to this BCS-Coalition conference call.

**Moderator:** Thank you ladies and gentlemen for joining us for this press conference. We will have an opening statement from President David Frohnmayr, University of Oregon and then we will open up the press conference to questions first from those gathered here in New Orleans and then from those on the phones.

President Frohnmayr.

**David Frohnmayr:** Thank you. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I'm Dave Frohnmayr from the University of Oregon. I'm reading this statement at the request of 13 presidents that represent our joint conclusions today.

Allow me first to thank NCAA President Myles Brand for facilitating this meeting.

We had a frank and wide-ranging discussions both of principles that guide our thinking processes, as well as options that might meet the needs that each of the parties has expressed. Frankly, the discussion was rich enough that we do not want to engage in public debate about what might or might not work among those options because we came in with the explicit notion of testing them with one another.

We feel sufficiently better informed now to take the next steps. We have agreed on a process in which we will immediately seek the advice of our respective conference commissioners and other members of our conferences.

We will be asking the 11 commissioners to select consultants of their choice and to meet within the immediate future, that is to say 60 or 90 days. The goal will be to come together with recommendations that are subject to being tested with much more specificity about how they fit with our view of the future direction of post-season football.

This group of presidents and chancellors has agreed to meet again to consider those recommendations in preparation for forwarding them to their respective conferences.

The spirit of the discussions was such as to lead us all to believe that we will be able to achieve constructive change. Thank you.

**Moderator:** We will open the session up to questions. Those of you on the telephone should know that we will have the statement that you just heard posted at NCAA.org as well as at BCSFootball.org and Coalition.tulane.edu as soon after this press conference as possible.

**Welch Suggs, Chronicle of Higher Education:**

When you came into this your people had a very specific set of plans or ideas for the future (morning) football or something like in here. Does that mean your plan was rejected?

**Scott Cowen:** No. Actually, no plans were rejected today. We came to the table as we both had promised each other with some illustrative models that we discussed and we didn't really rule out any of those models today. We just feel that we need to do a lot more discussion with our other conference presidents as well as commissioners and really to do some testing on the models that we talked about today. So nothing was rejected.

**Welch Suggs:** Marketplace testing?

**David Frohnmayer:** Yes.

**Josh DuBow, AP:** In terms of marketplace, where are you guys going to go in testing the marketplace?

**Scott Cowen:** Well what we'll do Josh is a – I don't know exactly where we'll go, but we will hire an independent consultant to work with our commissioner. Consultants who has expertise in really media rights and bowls, so we can get the best advice possible and then as Dave said is, at sometime in this process, all 11 commissioners with

whatever consultants they have hired will come together and craft a set of proposals that they will provide to all the presidents. So, we will use the best advice and consultants we have out there to test various ideas.

**Moderator:** Next question, please.

**Reporter:** What do you characterize as constructive change?

**David Frohnmayr:** Well, I think that anytime you have a system in which there are those who feel excluded or disadvantaged and there exists possible ways to accommodate them so that that feeling doesn't exist and so that there can be a greater sense of (frugality) and high competition -- a true -- a bowl system that works in order to bring together the one and the two.

You try to take the steps that will make -- make those changes and let me add to that, that we began this process in two ways more than a year ago when the presidents and chancellors who are part of the operations, if you will, of the six conferences got together and formed an oversight committee recognizing that we would be coming to a point where the contracts would need to be renewed or reexamined and at that point we not only asked among ourselves what some issues were concerning the then configuration of the Bowl Championship Series.

And also, last April our commissioners representing our six conferences convened with the other five conferences. So, all 11 conferences of the United States were represented at a three-day meeting in which our representatives asked them for their suggestions as to how the championship series might be improved.

So, we've approached this as a continuing process. We've looked at it with an entirely open mind. We wish it to be inclusive and we wish it to be something in which -- that there's value added for all people and to the extent we can find options that revise or change the system that do that, I think it's in everyone's interest and that's the spirit in which we approach it.

**Moderator:** We'll take one more question from those here and then we'll go to questions on the phone.

**Reporter:** I'm not sure who this is directed to, but just in a general stance here the a – you don't want to engage in public debate about what might or might not work. How would you characterize today's meeting? How much progress was made? Can you tell us a little bit about the meeting itself today?

**David Frohnmayer:** I would call it a meeting of theory testing, of frank statements of concern about the principles and practical objectives as well as practical obstacles to creating changes in the system.

And, I would say with respect to the various options that we explored, that it was more a question of dialogue and questioning and interrogation in a positive sense of that word about you know, what does this mean? What are its implications? How would it really work? Would it increase value to the system? How would it affect the Bowl System? How would it affect student athletes? How would it affect the academic calendar?

Those are all questions that arise in the present system and certainly arise in any modification of the present system. So, those kinds of questions back and forth I think characterize a quite vigorous dialogue over the space of probably the better part of two hours.

**Scott Cowen:** I would say that it was a very constructive day. This is a very complex process for everybody that's involved and I think there was clearly enough common agreement on a number of things today for us to craft the very detailed process we described to you today and for us to come back again in 60 or 90 days with some very specific proposals hopefully from our commissioners. So, I would say that's as good an outcome as you could have expected today, because it would have been, as I think you all know, a premature and inappropriate for us to come out and say, well the solution is "X" and not have discussed that with our colleagues or tested it in any way with our commissioners. So, I think we came out as well as you could possibly come out today.

**Myles Brand:** Let me add to those two comments. I would put this in the win column. A process was agreed upon by all parties to go forward in a constructive way. It was a frank dialogue. I think that this is the most you can expect at this meeting and it was accomplished.

**Moderator:** We have a question from the phone. Please indicate your name and affiliation.

**Operator:** We'll take our first question today is (Joe Drape) with New York Times.

**Joe Drape:** Hello gentlemen and for us on the phone the, win column statement, who made that?

**Myles Brand:** Myles Brand.

**Joe Drape:** OK thank you Dr. Brand. I guess twofold question. Is the Bowl Championship Series as we know it over? Did you guys get that far? And, I'm not saying drastic over, but was there an agreement to change it?

And second Scott, and this is for your constituent – you and your constituents. You've been pretty vocal about anti-trust legislation, going to Washington. Are you going to relent on that for now?

**Scott Cowen:** Well we have – let me take that second. We have been very clear since day one that we would prefer to resolve these issues among the university presidents, and that we would not go to Congress or to the courts unless we had exhausted every possibility and have found that those possibilities to be unsatisfactory.

So, we've had a consistent approach on that from day one. And today was another step in a very constructive dialogue and we assume no reason other than to continue to have this dialogue, because we think we're on a path to success.

**David Frohnmayr:** This is Dave Frohnmayr. Let me answer – or let me respond to the second question first and then to the first. We are quite confident that there is no violation of the anti-trust laws of the United States in the present configuration of the Bowl Championship Series.

I say that. I am a lawyer myself and a former State's Attorney General and we have high confidence in the legal advice that has guided of the BCS from – prior to its formation. That may remain a legitimate difference of opinion amongst us, but I don't want to let the question pass without reaffirming our very clear view that this is not a legal matter.

It is a matter of accommodating colleagues in Division I-A football and we're going to do our very best to do that. To the issue as to whether or not the BCS is dead, no, I don't think that that question – either that term or pronouncement or the question is appropriate to answer at this point.

Clearly, there will be changes in the system to the extent that they can be made to accommodate the interests that have been expressed. The principles that have been argued and we'll do our very best to do that.

But, it's premature to put a name on anything that may emerge. But, our point of departure is the present system. It doesn't involve scrapping the system and starting over. If we were advised by the joint meeting of the commissioners and persuaded in our meetings and discussions together that there's a better way to do it, we'll consider that and perhaps at that point, the BCS is a historical artifact, but right now, it's the point of departure, not something that we pronounced to be dead or even dying.

**Moderator:** We have another question from the phones.

**Operator:** We'll take our question now from (Mark Anderson), with Las Vegas Review Journal.

**Mark Anderson:** Yes, whoever wants to answer just – can you give an indication of just how many options that you were talking about that are being considered right now?

**Scott Cowen:** Well today our task was for each side to put at least one illustrative model on the table which each side did do and then we talked about an entire range of possibilities among those options. So, there was an infinite number of possibilities we talked about today and as Dave said in the statement, we did not zero on – in on one particular one, but I think we have a good sense of what the range of possibilities are.

**Mark Anderson:** Can you -- did you – with everyone contributing one possibility, did you narrow it down from there?

**Scott Cowen:** We did not today, because we thought there was merit in keeping the range of options open and testing various spots along that range. So, we did not foreclose on any of it today.

**Mark Anderson:** OK, thank you.

**Moderator:** Another question from the phone and then we'll return to questions here.

**Operator:** We'll take our next question from (Natalie Meisler) with the Denver Post.

**Natalie Meisler:** Yes. Could you tell me, how has the progress been made since that September so-called summit meeting in Chicago and can anyone say that there will be no going back to the six automatic, two at-large current configuration?

**David Frohnmayr:** This is Dave Frohnmayr responding to your question. I don't think we can foreclose anything at this point, because our dialogue is just getting down to the specifics that are going to be informed by the expert consultants and the conference commissioners themselves who are experts. Some of them have been at this business more than 20 years, as I think many of you here very well know.

So, I think it's not only premature, but probably misleading to tell you anything about a configuration of automatic slots or at-large competitive basis and so forth because we quite literally didn't get that specific in today's discussion and just to amplify the question which my colleague, Scott Cowen commented.

While there are dozens of options, each one of them has permutations themselves that may make the difference between success or failure. So, we are quite literally looking at details that make a huge difference in terms of whether something will work or not, despite whatever configuration we pick out as the basic skeletal framework. So we need to be extremely careful about saying what's in and what's out.

**Natalie Meisler:** OK. And, was there any – and what would you say would be the most concrete progress then since the September Chicago meeting?

**David Frohnmayr:** Are you asking that to Dave Frohnmayr?

**Natalie Meisler:** To Dr. Frohnmayer as well as Dr. Cowen.

**David Frohnmayer:** If I may Scott. I would say that putting this process back into the hands of the commissioners who have had a chance to think about it since our initial meeting with them last April and who now are guided by the presidents and chancellors, 13 strong in our group, about the range of possibilities from which they might pick and having heard some of the issues that do concern us, including obviously the academic calendar, the affect on the student athletes, the overall attempt that we are making to continue with the academic reform proposals of the NCAA as part of our mission.

So, all of these factors play into the – and now much more specific set of directions that the commissioners have received and I think that we'll be receiving a lot of very healthy and robust and very rich proposals.

**Scott Cowen:** Yes, I think I would just add – or underscore what Dave said is, I think we've made substantial progress since September 8th. Remember, on September 8th, that was I get to know one another and talk about general issues, but there was no specifics whatsoever on the table.

We're now at the stage where we've not only put some illustrative models on the table, but we've also talked about the range of possibilities and all the permutations as Dave said in between. We've now set out a very clear process and set of steps that have raised the commissioners consultants testing to get to a really set of recommendations for our consideration. That is considerable progress since September 8th.

**Moderator:** A question from (Dennis Dodd), then (Bill Rhoden) and then (Welch Suggs).  
Dennis.

**Dennis Dodd:** This question is to Dr. Frohnmayer and Dr. Cowen. So is everything still on the table? What's not on the table?

**David Frohnmayer:** Well, we're perhaps sparring to say that there's one matter that probably is not on the table and that is an NFL-style 16 team playoff that intrudes so fundamentally in our view on the academic calendar and on the concerns about

the commercialization and the extension of the season that that is something I think would not be productive to be discussed and certainly there's no inclination on our part that our colleagues do, but -- Scott you can speak for yourself too.

**Scott Cowen:** With that one exception, I believe everything else is open for conversation, but we concur to get to where we are now to get to that particular solution is not very practical, given where we're starting from for all the reasons Dave said. So, I would say that is the only concrete option that is clearly off the table that both sides would agree.

**Dennis Dodd:** I don't understand. Was Notre Dame part of the original six? Why and what was Father Malloy's role here today?

**David Frohnmayer:** Father Malloy was here to observe and to be part of the proceeding.

**Dennis Dodd:** Why were they not in the original six?

**David Frohnmayer:** Father Malloy was on the phone in our Chicago meeting. He was not -- his plane had mechanical trouble and he was unable to attend our Chicago meeting in person, but he attended by telephone conference call.

**Dennis Dodd:** But is he part of the six BCS?

**David Frohnmayer:** No, Notre Dame is not a conference.

**Dennis Dodd:** (Inaudible)?

**David Frohnmayer:** Yes they are and that's why he's here.

**Moderator:** Question from (Bill Rhoden of the New York Times).

**Bill Rhoden:** You had categorized earlier in the week as a cross-roads meeting, you know this would be a cross-roads meeting. Were you referring to the day or the process which began today and what do you think in terms progress -- was it a lot longer than you thought, or is longer haul than you thought?

**Scott Cowen:** No actually Bill, I think it actually will be shorter than I thought quite honestly, because first of all, the reason I thought this was going to be a very important meeting was, is we really had to agree today whether there was any common ground by which we could proceed in our conversations. And there clearly is.

And secondly, could we craft a process to get from the generalized conversation to a very specific proposal and we agreed on that process today and remember we're going to try to achieve that within 60 to 90 days. That's a very ambitious schedule. We hope we can keep to that. So that was important.

We could have met today, and said you know there's not enough common ground here that you know there's no point having any more conversations. That did not happen.

Or we could have stumbled on what the process steps would be coming out of today's meeting and we all agreed on the process steps that Dave described in the release.

**David Frohmayer:** May I expand on that Scott in two respects?

First of all, we are all agreed and all knowledgeable that this -- whatever it is that is devised needs to pass the test of agreement among our respective colleagues. Even if the 13 persons represented in the room were to agree, there are independent and very strong institutions, 117 of them in Division I-A.

The second is that this all needs to be tested against the market. We might devise what would be thought to be the ideal system of post-season football, only to find out that it did not add value or that inadvertently destroyed part of a bowl system or inadvertently denied opportunity of access to bowls because they were diminished in number. So, there are many factors dealing with the economics of post-season football that need to be tested, against which any model or agreed way of proceeding needs to be tested.

The second thing that I'm sure that everyone in this room and on the telephone knows but needs to be reminded of is that there are actually four different contracts that affect the BCS and its organization.

The first of which is the contract between The Big Ten, The Pac-10 and The Tournament of Roses by sequence of date and expiration that actually comes up first. So, there's a very difficult juggling act. Indeed, you might even call it an obstacle course in terms of the contractual underpinnings of the BCS system that needs to be accounted for that will mean that any item that we may even agree on unanimously may be difficult to accomplish in a very straight line way.

So bear those things in mind. You know, we can't rush to judgment even if we all agreed today on the ideal system, it will take sometime to test it and it will certainly take some difficult navigation in order to make – bring it to fruition to this multi-tiered four contract approval process.

**Moderator:** Bill, you had a follow-up question.

**Bill Rhoden:** Could you describe your role in all of this either as mediator, facilitator? How would you describe your role?

**David Frohnmayer:** My role is to work with the decision makers who are the 13 presidents to reach common ground and reach a solution that's good for them as academic institutions. Good for the fans and works especially with the student-athletes.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more questions. The first one will come from the telephone. The last one will come from (Welch Suggs).

**Operator:** We'll take a question from (Liz Clarke) with Washington Post.

**Liz Clarke:** Thanks. Yes, I have two fairly quick ones, I believe. Who will pay for the consultants that you're going to bring in?

**David Frohnmayer:** I would assume that each of the respective groups would be responsible for bearing its own expenses.

**Scott Cowen:** I think the ratio will be 95 percent of the BCS and five percent of the rest. I would agree with Dave's response, we'll pay for our fair share of it.

**Liz Clarke:** OK and then this is for Dr. Cowen. I'm sure that you're aware of the letter that the Utah Attorney General has sent to Elliott Spitzer about his concern of the

matter. Given the progress you all made today, will you be telling him to hold off on asking the Attorney's General Association to look at this as an anti-trust question?

**Scott Cowen:** You know I actually didn't even know or see of such a letter until yesterday. So I was quite surprised by it. But my advice to all legislators would be to not do anything and to continue to allow this process to play itself out. To, what I consider would be a very constructive and successful end and that has been, I cannot say this enough that has been our position all along. So we would simply just reiterate that position again.

**Liz Clark:** So basically, to cool their jets or you know ...

**Scott Cowen:** You know I know that our side has been accused of many things. That is we control the Senate, the House and Attorney Generals. We do not have that much power. As respectfully as we can, we will certainly let people know that we believe this process is moving along. The people we are dealing with on the other side of the table are people of good will and we believe we can come to a successful resolution. We do not need intervention from the courts or from the legislators at this time.

**Moderator:** The final question will come from (Welch Suggs).

**Welch Suggs:** With regards to bringing together – the conference commissioners and your consultants and so forth, and you say they have been working on this for a long time, so what do you think that they're going to accomplish now that they haven't already accomplished?

**Scott Cowen:** Well I could say for our side, we have a lot of antidotal information, (Walt) about the market viability of certain models and underscore antidotal. This now will put us in a much more pro-active mode to really test out these models with a set of consultants that we would use. So, this will advance not only our thinking, but our fact-finding on the various models that we talk with our colleagues from the BCS about.

Plus, I think there are now ideas on the table that have more concreteness to them than perhaps in the past and that might help get a more valid test of various models than has been done in prior situations.

**Moderator:**

Thank you very much and that concludes today's press conference.