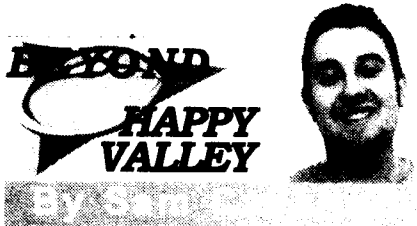


# Conference changes bring various questions; MAC looks good



The impending departure of Miami, Virginia Tech and now Boston College will cause the Big East quality of football to drop and in turn cause the conference to lose money.

That is a well-known fact. The Atlantic Coast Conference with these additions becomes a much better football conference, in the mold of the Big 12. The conference will see a huge increase in revenue and profits.

That is also a well-known fact. What isn't well known by the public is that the domino effect from this huge movement will cause major shakeups in the rest of college football's conferences, including moves by many of them to try and have 12-team leagues so they can institute a conference championship game to bring in revenue.

It starts with the Big East, where commissioner Mike Tranchese will have to find a way to replenish his conference with some teams. Right now it looks as if the major contenders to jump ship to the Big East are Louisville, Cincinnati and possibly South Florida, all current members of Conference USA.

So the Big East solves part of its problem there replacing Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College with Cincinnati, Louisville and South Florida. This is kind of like replacing Man-

tle, Maris and Berra with the New York Mets' outfield. Much like the Mets, the Big East can expect the same amount of success. Which means that they can kiss their automatic BCS bid goodbye.

That then leaves Conference USA without its best football program, Louisville, and another one of its bright spots and bigger markets in Cincinnati. Conference USA Commissioner Britton Banowsky has acquired SMU, Rice and Tulsa from the WAC and would like to get Marshall and Central Florida from the MAC. This would give them the 12 teams necessary, depending on what teams are leaving, to have the lucrative championship game. Although I don't know how lucrative a championship game between Marshall and TCU is.

The bigger question is how much worse can Conference USA possibly get? Adding Rice, SMU and Tulsa to the league, along with current doormat East Carolina gives the conference four teams that currently have five overall wins. By the way, when Banowsky acquired SMU, Tulsa and Rice from the WAC, did he have to give them anything in return like a wind-up toy to make it a fair exchange?

The question remains: what happens to the WAC and the MAC the conferences which are losing teams? The MAC will struggle with the loss of their flagship team, Marshall, but since they already have a 14-team league they will survive. The WAC you would think most likely would say "goodbye" to Tulsa, SMU and Rice without shedding a tear. But, instead the WAC has named the entire Sun Belt conference as possible candidates to replace the departed teams. I guess the WAC sees

some potential in Arkansas State or Louisiana-Lafayette. Although the Sun Belt could be in position to lose its crown jewel, North Texas, who by leaving the conference would give up its just-about-guaranteed trip to the prestigious New Orleans Bowl every December.

Which leaves the Sun Belt recruiting what teams as replacements? Northwestern State. McNeese State. Maybe even Sam Houston State.

College football is not far away from total disarray with teams jumping conferences like professional athletes jump from team to team. Why? Because college sports are becoming what professional sports already are — business.

**MAC Showdown**  
The MAC has achieved another milestone as two of its teams, Northern Illinois and Bowling Green, play on Saturday with both of them ranked in the AP Top 25 poll. No. 12 Northern Illinois has gotten the majority of the publicity in the MAC this year and rightfully so. They have defeated three BCS conference teams in Iowa State, Alabama and Maryland. Running back Michael Turner is a legitimate threat to any team and has amassed 929 yards rushing.

No. 23 Bowling Green is no slouch with star quarterback Josh Harris leading its attack. He has over 2,100 yards of total offense and 17 touchdowns. The Falcons upset No. 10 Purdue in their season opener, giving the Boilermakers their only loss of the season. The lone setback for Bowling Green was a close 24-17 loss to defending national champion Ohio State.

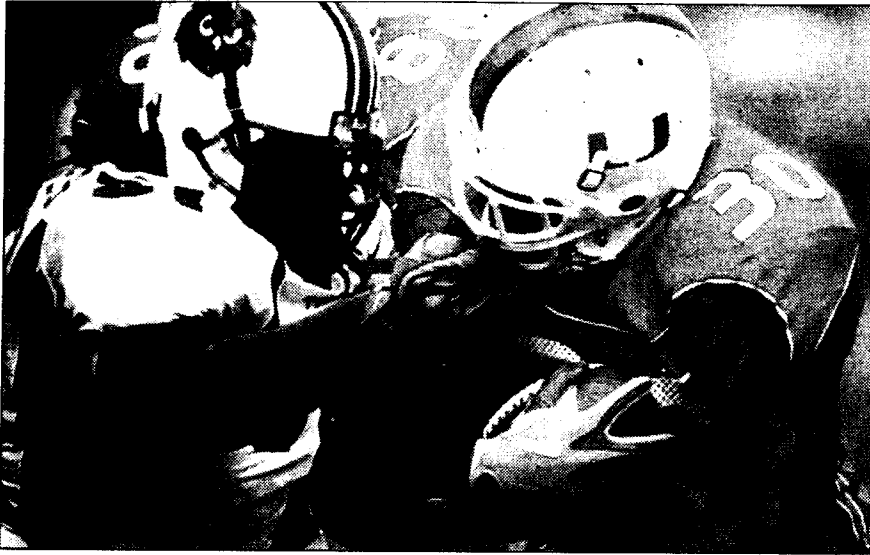
The game is being played in Bowling Green, but Northern Illinois should be able to pull off the close victory with a steady ground attack.

**Upset of the Week**  
Why on Earth would I pick Kansas this week against Kansas State? One reason is that I love the underdog and two is that in a rivalry game you can throw out the records. While I don't think Kansas (21-point underdogs) will be able to win this game straight up, I do believe they will keep it rather close and within the 21-point spread. This would seem like a prediction doomed to fail considering in their last five meetings the Wildcats have outscored the Jayhawks by a score of 260 to 34.

Last week: Nebraska creamed the Aggies, not even keeping the game within the 10-point spread, dropping my record to 3-4.



Al Goldis/Associated Press



Wilfredo Lee/Associated Press

Temple defensive end Anthony DeGannes grabs Miami running back Tyrone Moss's face mask. Miami will be leaving the Big East to join the ACC.

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Northern Illinois' Michael Turner breaks through for a fourth-quarter gain against Central Michigan. Northern Illinois is currently undefeated and ranked tenth in the first BCS poll of the year.

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