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Big East Conference’s stability tied to Missouri
By Ralph D. Russo
The Associated Press
Wednesday, October 19, 2011

NEW YORK — The Big East wants to expand to 12 football teams “the sooner the better.”

The problem is the Big East can’t be sure if its current members are staying put until Missouri, the Big 12 and the Southeastern Conference figure out what their next steps will be in the ongoing drama of conference realignment.

“The overall landscape is still so very unsettled,” Big East Commissioner John Marinatto said Tuesday during a conference call with reporters.

“We’re not going to pause until the Missouri situation is settled because it might not be settled for a while.”

The Big East’s presidents unanimously voted Monday night to increase the league’s withdrawal fee from $5 million to $10 million when an expansion plan is executed, Marinatto said.

Marinatto declined to talk about specific schools the Big East wants to add, but did say the Big East has “identified specific teams, and if any one of those teams commits (to joining the league), the exit fee increases.”

A person with knowledge of the Big East’s plan told The Associated Press that the addition of Navy or Air Force would trigger the increase in the exit fee.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk publicly about which schools the league is targeting.
Navy athletic director Chet Gladchuk told the AP on Tuesday the Big East and the academy have been in contact, but he was unaware of the league’s most recent move.

“Certainly a reconfigured Big East with stable core members is something the Naval Academy needs to consider,” he said.

Air Force spokesman Troy Garnhart said in an email school officials would not comment.

Gladchuk said the two academies communicate, but will make decisions independently.

“I’m not convinced that it needs to be a package deal,” Gladchuk said.

Officials in the Big East have previously told the AP the conference’s plan to get to 12 members includes Navy, Air Force and Boise State as football-only members and Central Florida, Houston and SMU for all sports.

East Carolina applied for Big East membership last month but, according to reports, is not on the conference’s current invite list.

Marinatto said no invitations have gone out and he could not give a timetable for when the Big East hopes to complete its expansion work.

“Stay tuned, we’re working diligently,” he said. “We’re not going to rush ourselves. The sooner the better.”

The Big East currently has six football members committed to the conference beyond this season, and eight schools that do not compete in the league in football, including Notre Dame.

Pittsburgh and Syracuse have accepted invitations to join the Atlantic Coast Conference and TCU, previously scheduled to join the Big East in 2012, instead will join the Big 12.

And the Big East is in danger of losing more members.

Officials from Boise State, Air Force and Navy have all expressed concerns about that.
“When you go from nine schools to six ... we need to do our due diligence to ask how stable are the remaining six,” Gladchuk said.

Marinatto said the current Big East members are operating in “good faith” with one another.

“The exit fee it a sign of stability, but it’s not the only thing we’re looking at,” he said. “Everyone, given the environment that we’re all in is looking for one thing: stability.”

Including Missouri, which is considering leaving the Big 12 for the SEC, a move that would leave the Big 12 in need of at least one more member.

The Missouri board of curators will meet Thursday and Friday in Kansas City, though it has not announced whether a decision about a conference will be made then.

Big East members West Virginia and Louisville are potential Big 12 replacements for Missouri.

An even worse scenario for the Big East has the Big 12 taking Louisville, West Virginia and Cincinnati from the Big East to get back to 12 members if Missouri leaves.

Marinatto said Big East officials have not discussed the possibility of being whittled down to a point where it would have to give up football.

The league has made protecting its status as an automatic qualifier in the Bowl Championship Series a priority.

“We’re designing a plan that would include schools that would help us to do that,” Marinatto said.

Adding Boise State, one of the most successful football programs in the country over the last decade, is the linchpin to that plan. Losing AQ status would cost the Big East millions of dollars in revenue and limit its members opportunities to compete for a national championship.
The current BCS contracts lock in the Big East’s BCS bid for this season and the next two, Marinatto said. There are no guarantees beyond that for any league, he said.

He also reiterated the Big East intends to hold Pitt and Syracuse to the league’s 27-month notification rule and keep those schools in the league for the next two years. He said the conference has looked at 14-team models for next season.
The Wilmington Star News
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Sheena Vaught (right), a senior at UNCW, is directing a documentary film on Holden Beach artist Cole Kernstine. Photo by Paul Stephen

Filmmaker documents local sculptor's work in ‘Colestine'
By Chanda Marlowe
StarNews Correspondent

HOLDEN BEACH | Adapting as he goes, Nicholas “Cole” Kernstine of Holden Beach is carving out a place for himself in the art world, creating massive sculptures out of wood, aluminum and steel. Many are smaller replicas of his larger sculptures, which are on display in locations from North Carolina to Finland.

His talent thus far has been tucked away, but a local aspiring filmmaker, Sheena Vaught, is bringing his story to light in her documentary “Colestine.”

Their paths crossed last year, when Kernstine was volunteering at West Brunswick High School. He taught basic aluminum sculpting – an art form that students usually aren't exposed to until college.

Kernstine's artwork and methods are far from conventional. His eco-friendly, recycled materials and life lessons he offers students make him stand out.

Art teacher Sheila Vaught suggested the topic to her daughter, Sheena Vaught, for her senior seminar project at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. It was an easy decision.
“The type of artist that he was – aluminum casting and sculpting – was already interesting enough,” Sheena Vaught said. “Then to find out that he was giving back made his story great.”

After pitching the idea to her film professor, she was able to take the lead as director of this project.

There are two months remaining until production is complete.

Viewers will learn how the 25-year-old graduate of East Carolina University pursues his passion despite costs and setbacks, and how art itself is a creative outlet for him.

“Most of my art is positive,” Kerstine said. “There's enough bad stuff in the world. People need to smile.”

His most meaningful piece is titled “Contact” and it mirrors the arc of a golf swing. Once located at the New Bern airport, it was recently donated and put on display at the Cotton Valley Country Club in Tarboro, near Rocky Mount. The story behind its relocation is revealed in the documentary.

Both Vaught and Kernstine have graduate school in mind for the future. In the meantime, he'll be teaching a metal sculpture course through Brunswick Community College's Continuing Education department.

In the spring, Vaught will work on her next project – a documentary film on renowned local artist Ivey Hayes.

For more information about the documentary “Colestine,” visit www.colestine.yolasite.com. Contact BCC's Continuing Education Department at 755-7378 if interested in Kernstine's metal sculpture course.
Still smarting from July's state budget cuts, University of North Carolina Wilmington's chancellor is looking ahead to next year.

With a predicted fourth year of budget cuts at the university, Chancellor Gary Miller said during a meeting Tuesday with local media that the school was looking for efficiencies.

And to create effective budgeting opportunities, Miller said he was forming a council tasked with finding innovative ideas on how to make changes at the school.

"I think there is a wealth of ideas out there on how we can do things better," he said. "This is a way to have a conversation to see if those ideas will work."

In July, the school received a 15.8-percent cut to its budget, or $16.6 million. That cut has caused the school to take measures that haven't been popular, including merging the Physics and Physical Oceanography Department with the Geology and Geography Department.

Miller said the new Innovation Council will help increase conversations on how to manage the cuts. The council will also look at business opportunities and ways to improve education at the school.
The group will officially be formed Wednesday and begin meeting in the next few weeks, Miller said. It will include administrators, faculty and students.

While the group addresses the current budget concerns, he said the hope was to have the group tackle future issues too.

"This is a process of creating new ideas during a time of rapid change," he said.

He said the inspiration for the council came from other universities.

"It helps build a culture of innovation," Miller said,

He noted that not every idea was going to fit at the school, but it's part of the process of staying on the cutting edge.

"If it doesn't work," he said, "we will go back to the drawing board and try again."

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A lawyer for former University of North Carolina football coach Butch Davis has filed papers in Orange County Court requesting that a subpoena for Davis' cellphone records be quashed.

A media coalition led by The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer subpoenaed records of calls from Davis' "personal" cellphone because Davis used it to make business calls while employed by UNC.

Davis' lawyer, Jon Sasser of Ellis & Winters LLP, wants a judge to quash the subpoena and enter a protective order, calling the subpoena "unduly burdensome, unreasonable and oppressive."

Sasser argues that the subpoena seeks production of information that is no longer relevant in the case and that the phone records sought do not constitute a public record.

In May, Wake County Judge Howard Manning Jr. granted the media coalition's request for UNC to turn over phone records of Davis, former associate head coach John Blake and athletics director Dick Baddour.

The media coalition later subpoenaed Davis' "personal" cellphone records. Communications conducted on behalf of a public entity on personal phones are not exempt from public review under the North Carolina public records law.

In an affidavit, Davis said the media's handling of previous records requests has caused "an extreme amount of suffering and embarrassment" for him.
He objected to his home address - albeit his former address - appearing in court papers that were posted online by media outlets.

He also said that in June of 2011, after UNC "produced certain records," someone revealed his cellphone number to "unscrupulous individuals." He said the same thing happened to the cellphone numbers of his teenage son and wife.

Davis said his family received unsolicited calls from media outlets and "crank calls" from fans of other college football programs. According to his affidavit, Davis and his family were forced to change their contact information.

"As a former NFL head coach, and head coach of two college teams, I am well aware of the intense scrutiny directed at my profession," Davis said in the affidavit. "However, as a private citizen, I also believe that I have a right to protect my own privacy as well as a duty to protect the privacy of my family, friends and business associates."

Before he was fired in July, Davis had said he would produce records of his business calls with personal calls redacted for the media. He has not released those records.

In his affidavit, Davis offered to have Manning or another person he designates review Davis' unredacted records if Manning won't quash the subpoena.

"I would also be happy to meet privately with the court or its designee to answer any questions that the court may have about the records, or any particular phone number, in order to address this request," Davis said. "Again, I have nothing to hide, other than the protection of my privacy as well as the privacy of others."

The media have been seeking records of Davis' calls as a result of the NCAA's investigation of UNC's football program. The probe of academic fraud and impermissible benefits resulted in 14 players missing at least one game and seven players missing the entire season in 2010.

UNC was cited with nine major violations by the NCAA and has self-imposed sanctions including two years of probation, the vacating of 16 wins from the 2008 and 2009 seasons, and the cutting of three football scholarships for the next three seasons.

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In China, Perdue touts N.C. universities

BY ROB CHRISTENSEN AND LYNN BONNER - STAFF WRITER

Gov. Bev Perdue and Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco led a discussion Tuesday with business and education leaders in Beijing about opportunities for Chinese students at North Carolina colleges, according to the governor's office.

The forum was hosted by New Mind Education, a Raleigh company that helps Chinese students succeed in American colleges. Perdue used the event to promote Tar Heel schools as a destination for Chinese students.

"Today's event was an opportunity to both help a great North Carolina company grow its business in China and to show off our colleges and universities to Chinese students and leaders," Perdue said in a statement. "In addition to paying out-of-state tuition and bringing revenue to our state, international students increase campus diversity and help foster a greater understanding between our countries."
Student loan debt hits record levels
By Dennis Cauchon, USA TODAY
Updated October 19, 2011

Students and workers seeking retraining are borrowing extraordinary amounts of money through federal loan programs, potentially putting a huge burden on the backs of young people looking for jobs and trying to start careers.

The amount of student loans taken out last year crossed the $100 billion mark for the first time and total loans outstanding will exceed $1 trillion for the first time this year. Americans now owe more on student loans than on credit cards, reports the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Students are borrowing twice what they did a decade ago after adjusting for inflation, the College Board reports. Total outstanding debt has doubled in the past five years — a sharp contrast to consumers reducing what's owed on home loans and credit cards.

Taxpayers and other lenders have little risk of losing money on the loans, unlike mortgages made during the real estate bubble. Congress has given the lenders, the government included, broad collection powers, far greater than those of mortgage or credit card lenders. The debt can't be shed in bankruptcy.
The credit risk falls on young people who will start adult life deeper in debt, a burden that could place a drag on the economy in the future.

"Students who borrow too much end up delaying life-cycle events such as buying a car, buying a home, getting married (and) having children," says Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org.

"It's going to create a generation of wage slavery," says Nick Pardini, a Villanova University graduate student in finance who has warned on a blog for investors that student loans are the next credit bubble — with borrowers, rather than lenders, as the losers.

Full-time undergraduate students borrowed an average $4,963 in 2010, up 63% from a decade earlier after adjusting for inflation, the College Board reports. What's happening:

•**Defaults.** The portion of borrowers in default — more than nine months behind on payments — rose from 6.7% in 2007 to 8.8% in 2009, according to the most recent federal data.

•**For profit-schools.** The highest default rates are at for-profit schools that tend to serve lower-income students and offer courses online. The University of Phoenix, the nation's largest, got 88% of its revenue from federal programs last year, most of it from student loans.

"Federal student loans are like no other loans," says Alisa Cunningham, research chief at the Institute for Higher Education Policy. "The consequences are so high for making a mistake."