

SEC'S SPRING MEETINGS

The future of college sports is in the balance at Florida resort

BY EDDIE PELLIS
AP NATIONAL WRITER

MIRAMAR BEACH, Fla. — Nothing less than the future of college sports is being hashed this week out in conference rooms spread throughout a sprawling seaside resort in Florida.

These are the Southeastern Conference's annual spring meetings — a gathering of school presidents, athletic directors and coaches. It might be argued that the 2025 affair carries more weight than it ever has.

Among the topics are the future of the College Football Playoff, the SEC's own schedule, the transfer portal and the NCAA itself. All are influenced by the fate of a multibillion-dollar lawsuit settlement that hovers over almost every corner of college athletics.

As a reminder of what's at stake, a handful of football coaches detailed the uncertainties they faced with the start of practice closing in, one of which is still not knowing how many players they'll be able to suit up for the upcoming season.

"It's challenging when you're trying to figure out what you can

do for football camp on July 30th, when we really don't have much of a resolution of what that's going to look like," Texas A&M coach Mike Elko said.

Some of the topics being discussed this week and the SEC's role in sorting them out:

College Football Playoff

The SEC and Big Ten will decide whether to expand the CFP from 12 to 14 or 16 teams, and will ultimately have the final say on how many automatic bids they and other conferences will receive. Among the proposals is one in which those two conferences would receive four automatic bid, and another that allots one automatic bid to five conferences and 11 at-large slots.

"The best system with 16 should be the 16 best," said Ole Miss coach Lane Kiffin, a critic of the system last year when his team was left out of the first 12-team field. "I don't know exactly how that's figured out"

The Big 12 and Atlantic Coast conferences, which are the other two members of the Power Four, will be able to offer their

input — but that's all it is — along with the rest of the smaller conferences who are involved in the CFP structure.

Asked about the relationship with his fellow commissioners, the SEC's Greg Sankey relayed a recent conversation he had with one of his predecessors, Roy Kramer, who had his share of contentious arguments with leaders of other conferences.

"He said, 'We'd walk out of some of those rooms, and we weren't going to talk to each other for a year. We hated each other, but we always figured a way out,'" Sankey said. "I take great comfort in that. And I take the responsibility to figure that out."

At stake is not only what the six seasons starting in 2026 will look like, but — if the SEC and Big Ten create an unrepairable rift with the other Power Four leagues — what college football might become once ESPN's \$7.8 billion contract to televise the games ends after the 2031 season.

The SEC's decision on whether to add a ninth league game and a pos-

sible shift from a conference title game to a series of "play-in" games for newly created automatic qualifying spots are also related to the CFP's next format.

The transfer portal If only there weren't that little problem of the "student" in "student-athlete," some of the decisions about the transfer portal would be so much simpler.

Because schools try to sync the timing of the window when players can leave one school for another with the academic calendar, football finds itself having to choose

between a window that opens during the playoff — around the time the spring semester kicks off — or one that opens in the spring and predates the fall semester.

The playoff option might be more convenient for some coaches, who could build their roster and do offseason workouts with those players from January through the spring. But that could lead to a repeat of some of the awkward moves from last season, with players on teams contending for a title leaving for better offers.

Kentucky New Era.

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Public Hearing**

The Christian County Board of Education has scheduled a public hearing on the proposed Christian County District Facility Plan for Monday, June 2, 2025, at 6:00 PM CDT, at the Christian County Board of Education, located at 200 Glass Avenue, Hopkinsville, KY 42240. The District Facility Plan lists the pending capital construction and/or renovation projects that the school district may undertake, and the priority order, if applicable, that projects will be initiated. Copies of the proposed District Facility Plan are available for examination by interested individuals at the Board of Education offices, 200 Glass Ave., Hopkinsville, KY 42240, between 8:00 AM and 3:00 PM. Monday through Friday, May 19, 2025 through May 30, 2025. Copies are also available at the office of each school in the district. Questions may be directed to Assistant Superintendent Kevin Crider at (270) 887-7000. Those individuals wishing to comment on the proposed District Facility Plan may present oral or written comments at the public hearing.

The Christian County Board of Education, after due process, will forward the approved District Facility Plan to the Kentucky Department of Education for approval.

The public hearing is being scheduled in accordance with KRS 157.620, and regulated by 702 KAR 4:180.

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