

Big 12 commissioner leaves legacy behind

The Manhattan Mercury
via the Associated Press

It might be an exaggeration to say that Chuck Neinas saved the Big 12 Conference, but it's hard to imagine what the conference would be like without his recent involvement.

He took over as interim commissioner last September after Dan Beebe was fired – at a time the conference, a once-proud group of 12 teams, was slipping from 10 toward eight teams and even greater uncertainty.

And in a matter of eight months, Mr. Neinas stabilized a conference on the verge of disintegrating.

Even better, he presided over the welcoming of Texas Christian University and West Virginia University to the conference. They replaced Texas A&M and Missouri, both of which quit to join the Southeastern Conference.

"The main thing," Mr. Neinas told the *Kansas City Star*, "was to solidify the conference, get them working together and moving forward together."

He did that, and much more. To his credit, he had the respect of conference officials from the outset.

He had earned it through a long and varied career that included service as Big 8 Conference commissioner from 1971 to 1980 and that has left him one of the most respected college figures in the country.

Mr. Neinas hasn't just stabilized the Big 12, he has been involved in a vastly improved television package that is expected to sharply increase the teams' annual revenue and boost regional and national TV exposure. Schools could each receive up to \$20 million a year, more than twice what some of the members now receive in such arrangements.

More recently the Big 12 and SEC have announced plans for what is being called the Champions Bowl, a postseason game between the two conference champions. If the champions are involved in the national championship picture, the next strongest available teams from the two conferences

would play.

Just as important but perhaps less tangible is the effect Mr. Neinas has had on the conference's unity. His professionalism, his force of will and his good will prevailed over the rivalries that left the conference vulnerable. As a result, the Big 12 is as strong now as it has been in recent memory.

It is strong enough that members don't feel pressured to expand, despite the extra revenue a conference championship would attract. And it is strong enough now that other schools with solid programs – Florida State comes immediately to mind – have expressed overt interest in joining the Big 12.

And the conference is strong enough to have attracted Bob Bowlsby, former athletic director at Stanford University, to succeed Mr. Neinas July 1.

Mr. Bowlsby will face all the challenges of contemporary college athletics, but thanks in large part to Mr. Neinas, he will start from a position of strength.

Out at second



KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press
A Bambino girl tagged second base to get her opponent out Wednesday during a Bambino girls summer league softball game at the Colby ball fields.

Court in session for Penn State sex abuse case

By Mark Scoloro
Associated Press

BELLEFONTE, Pa. – A jury of seven women and five men will get their first glimpse of the case against former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky – and his defense – when opening statements begin inside a central Pennsylvania courthouse.

Sandusky's lawyers and state prosecutors have been under a gag order for months, so their outline of the case to jurors Monday

should reveal new details about an investigation that has taken several years.

Sandusky, 68, faces 52 criminal counts that he sexually abused 10 boys over 15 years, allegations he has denied. Sandusky's lawyers were not able to get the judge to delay the trial, and on Friday Judge John Cleland rejected their request to have some or all of the counts dismissed.

A pair of scathing grand jury reports allege Sandusky sexually abused young boys he met through

The Second Mile, a charity he established in 1977. Sandusky allegedly used his connection to the football program and gifts to groom boys for sexual contact that the grand jury said occurred at his home or in the team facilities on Penn State's campus.

Sandusky arrived shortly after 8 a.m. with his attorney, Joe Amendola. He didn't respond to questions but smiled briefly before entering the courthouse. A spokesman for the Pennsylvania courts system said Judge John Cleland

called the courtroom into session just after 9 a.m.

Many of the alleged victims are expected to take the stand for the prosecution, and their credibility in jurors' eyes could prove to be the decisive factor in determining the verdict.

Slade McLaughlin, the attorney for the teen identified in the grand jury report as Victim 1, said he expects his client to testify Monday or Tuesday.

Several dozen members of the public stood in line outside the

courthouse, also hoping to get a seat. Outside, satellite trucks lined the streets of Bellefonte, the small town about 10 miles from Penn State where as massive media contingent gathered for the trial.

Snowboards, hockey sticks and other items described in a grand jury report as gifts lavished on one of the victims were carried into the courthouse before the start of the morning session.

Mindful of protecting the privacy of witnesses, officials set up a privacy tent at the rear of the

courthouse while the doors were covered to obscure views of the witness-holding areas.

However the criminal case ends, when it comes to getting to the bottom of what happened, the trial will not be the final word.

The state attorney general's office has repeatedly indicated it has an "active and ongoing" related investigation, and the mere existence of the open investigation suggests additional criminal charges could result.

Thank you, alumni and friends of Fort Hays State University.



*"The economy had collapsed a year earlier, and the nation was still reeling. Fort Hays State University was growing, but declining state support threatened our future. In September 2009 we launched the **Cornerstone Campaign** to raise \$60 million for new scholarships, endowed faculty positions, enhanced research, departmental projects, athletic programs, technology upgrades and renovations."*

– Dr. Edward H. Hammond
President, Fort Hays State University

**You heard the call.
Thank you on behalf of
the state of Kansas and
Fort Hays State University.**

Our largest fundraising effort ever, which was led by the FHSU Foundation, has been a great success. The goal to raise \$60 million by 2012 has arrived ahead of time and above expectations. The Cornerstone Campaign has raised \$68,743,800.

Nothing is more vital to the continuing economic turnaround in Kansas and the nation than higher education, which provides the trained workers to drive innovation and create new enterprises. The Cornerstone Campaign was needed to meet budgetary challenges and to accomplish the educational goals at FHSU for the coming years.

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