



## ALERTS

### College Athletics On The Brink

August 13, 2020

#### Highlights

Several major college conferences to postpone fall sports, including football

Postponements likely to cause huge financial problems for universities

Football's cancellation follows loss of college basketball championships and College World Series in the spring

The Mountain West Conference, which includes 11 universities including the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado State, San Diego State and UNLV will postpone all fall sports, including football because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision follows the announcement by the Mid-American conference it was also shelving the fall sports season.

It is expected the Big Ten Conference, and Pac-12, two of the so-called "Power Five" conferences, will make an announcement within the next day its athletes will not play because of the virus. Media reports say the other three major conferences are also discussing their options, about possibly going forward.

"We were hopeful we could carefully and responsibly conduct competition as originally scheduled with essential protocols in place,"

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Mountain West Commissioner Craig Thompson said. “However, numerous external factors and unknowns outside our control made this difficult decision necessary.”

The postponement of football season will blow a huge hole in the budgets of college athletic departments, which rely on football, along with the enormous amount of money it raises through television revenue and spectators, to fund dozens of smaller, non-revenue sports.

Middle-tier, Division 1 schools also rely on early season games versus larger schools. For instance, 39 of those medium-sized schools had games scheduled, where they would pocket an estimated \$65 million by showing up against powerhouse schools such as Ohio State, Wisconsin or Clemson, taking a pounding and going home with a million dollar plus check.

With that money, and football revenue now in jeopardy, university athletic directors are already sharpening their budget axes. Kent State University in Ohio has already announced a 20% cut in its athletic department budget. Nearby, the University of Akron has announced layoffs and the university has already cut its sports budget 23%, and eliminated three sports, men’s golf, cross country and women’s tennis.

In the past six months since we first heard the words COVID-19 or coronavirus, we have learned much about how this virus spreads, makes people ill and kills. In March and April, university athletic departments learned their first painful lessons when March Madness and the spring sports seasons, including the College World Series were cancelled because of the virus. Now it seems we are on the brink of another important decision, which has the potential to radically restructure both the financial and long-standing structure of college athletics for many years to come.

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