



Ivy League May Consider Adding Postseason Basketball Tournament

By Dan Bollerman

Dec. 6 (Bloomberg) -- Ivy League athletic directors might take a step tomorrow toward holding the conference's first postseason basketball tournament in its 50-year history.

Directors from the conference, which comprises eight of the most prestigious schools in the U.S., are scheduled to meet in New York and decide whether to investigate holding a tournament.

``They're now at the starting point of thinking about whether to start one," Carolyn Campbell-McGovern, the league's senior associate director, said yesterday from the league office in Princeton, New Jersey. ``We've gone beyond just automatically saying no."

Rather than hold a postseason basketball tournament, the conference gives its automatic berth in the National Collegiate Athletic Association championship to its regular-season winner. It's the only one of the 31 leagues that receive automatic berths into the 65-team tournament to do so.

Campbell-McGovern said the topic has come up in the past during regular meetings of the athletic directors of the eight league schools -- Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale. This time, they have formed a smaller group to get information.

``At this point a few people have been less resistant to the idea than in the past," Campbell-

McGovern said.

League Play

The conference has resisted staging a tournament because school presidents wanted the champion determined by league play when it was founded in 1956, said Chuck Yrigoyen, a league associate director.

Either Penn or Princeton have won all the league's automatic NCAA tournament berths since 1989, and all but two since 1969. Four years ago, Penn, Princeton and Yale tied for the regular-season title and had a two-game playoff that was won by the Quakers. Six other times, two teams with the same league record played each other for the NCAA berth.

Princeton Athletic Director Gary Walters is the chairman of the NCAA's Division I basketball committee this year, his fifth and last as a member. The panel decides what schools get the 34 at-large bids to the tournament.

A league tournament might have trouble generating enough revenue to cover expenses, Ken Shropshire, the director of the Wharton Sports Business Initiative at Penn, said in a telephone interview. He said he prefers no change to the league's format.

ESPN shows almost all of the other conference tournament finals as part of its "Championship Week" programming and aired the season-ending Penn-Princeton game for several years, as it frequently had the automatic bid on the line.

Missing Class

While getting more television exposure would be a plus, Shropshire said it might be difficult to get approval from the university administrations.

``I think that if the presidents get it in the end, they'll take a step back and say that it's is another opportunity to miss class," Shropshire said.

The Big Ten Conference began a postseason tournament in 1998. Pacific-10 had one from 1987-90, dropped it, then restarted it in 2002.

The Ivy League, which doesn't offer athletic scholarships, has had the same eight members since it began play in 1956.

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