

The BIG EAST Conference

The 2006 BIG EAST Conference football season was one of the year's best sports stories. Each week seemed to bring with it memorable matchups and record-breaking feats. But it was the brilliant ending – a perfect 5-0 record in bowl games – that put the finishing touches on this BIG EAST best seller.

The league ended the 2006 regular season with a winning percentage of .800 in non-conference games (32-8 record) – the highest in the 16-year history of the conference. This mark included an 11-7 record against BCS Conference opponents. In addition, the final combined overall winning percentage of all BIG EAST football teams in '06 (.644) was the best of any Division I-A conference in the country.

Five of the eight BIG EAST teams went to bowl games and all five emerged victorious. The league captured wins in the FedEx Orange Bowl, the Gator Bowl, the Texas Bowl, the PapaJohn's.com Bowl and the International Bowl. The BIG EAST's 5-0 bowl mark was the best bowl record of any Division I-A conference in '06, earning the league ESPN's Bowl Challenge Cup. It was only the second time since the inception of the BCS that an automatic qualifying conference has gone undefeated in any one bowl season.

Three BIG EAST teams wound down the '06 campaign in the top 12 of the final Associated Press and *USA Today* Polls.

In 2005, three new schools – the University of Cincinnati, University of Louisville and University of South Florida – joined Connecticut, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Syracuse and West Virginia in the BIG EAST. The additions increased the football membership to eight schools and gave the BIG EAST a presence that ranged as far south as Tampa, Fla., and as far west as Louisville, Ky.



BIG EAST commissioner Mike Tranghese visited a UConn football practice during preseason camp in 2004 to officially welcome head coach Randy Edsall and the Huskies to BIG EAST football.

In the first season as the “new-look” BIG EAST in 2005, four conference schools earned trips to bowl games.

Over the last six seasons, the BIG EAST has compiled one of the best winning percentages of any BCS conference in bowl games. BIG EAST Conference teams are 21-13 in postseason play since 2000.

The BIG EAST has been a frequent contender for the national championship. Eight times in the league's 16 seasons a BIG EAST squad has been in a bowl game, playing for a claim to the national crown.

The BIG EAST has always been proud of its football student-athletes for their academic achievements. In 2006, three BIG EAST players – including Rhema Fuller of UConn – were finalists for the Draddy Trophy. Known in many circles as the “Academic Heisman,” the Draddy Trophy continues to be one of college football's most sought after and competitive awards, recognizing an individual as the absolute best in the country for his combined academic success, football performance and exemplary community leadership.

Since its birth, the BIG EAST has been a national power both on and off the field. Commissioner Michael Tranghese served as coordinator of the BCS for two years from 2002-03. He has spearheaded the development of BIG EAST football since its beginning.

BIG EAST™

CONFERENCE





*Michael A. Tranghese
Commissioner*



*Nick Carparelli Jr.
Associate Commissioner
for Football*



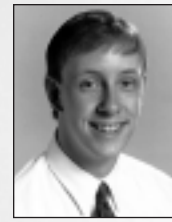
*John Marinatto
Associate Commissioner*



*Tom Odjakjian
Associate Commissioner*



*John Paquette
Associate Commissioner
for Communications*



*Jon Gust
Director of Communications
(Football)*



*John Soffey
Coordinator of Football
Officiating*

The BIG EAST Conference's entrance into football was announced on February 5, 1991. The league gained instant notice and credibility with its level of excellence on the field and with its television and bowl relationships. The BIG EAST has been a charter member of each of the major bowl agreements with the major conferences, beginning with The Bowl Coalition in 1992 followed by The Bowl Alliance in '95. The Bowl Championship Series began in '98.

Extensive television exposure and the BIG EAST have been synonymous terms. For football, the league established its own regional television package in 1991 before it had played a game. The BIG EAST Television Network immediately was the largest regional college football network in the country.

The BIG EAST has television agreements with ABC and ESPN that run through the 2007 season. Both agreements ensure that ABC or ESPN telecasts a BIG EAST game virtually every week of the year. The BIG EAST and ESPN have already agreed on a new six-year contract that will further enhance the league's exposure. The new agreement will begin with the 2008 regular season and run through 2013.

Of the 73 games played this past season involving BIG EAST teams, 29 of them were seen on ABC, ESPN or ESPN2. In addition, 37 others were seen on either ESPN Regional, ESPNU, ESPN360, FSN, CSTV or the NFL Network.

ESPN Regional Television owns broadcasting rights for all telecasts not assigned to ABC or ESPN. ERT, which took over for the BIG EAST Network in 1996, produces and distributes additional games, including a BIG EAST Game of the Week, through syndication, local markets and pay-per-view.

The BIG EAST has always aligned itself with prestigious bowl games. The league is one of the original founders of the Bowl Championship Series and continues to be one of only six conferences that receive an automatic annual bid.

The BIG EAST Conference champion earns the league's automatic BCS bid. The BCS – which enters its 10th season in 2007-08 – is a five-game arrangement for postseason college football that is designed to match the two top-rated teams in a national championship game and to create exciting and competitive matchups between eight other highly regarded teams in four other BCS games.

If the BIG EAST champion finishes No. 1 or No. 2 in the final BCS standings, then that team will earn a spot in the BCS National Championship Game. Otherwise, the league champion will compete in one of the four remaining BCS bowl games – the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, FedEx Orange Bowl, Allstate Sugar Bowl or the Rose Bowl. Each bowl hosts two games once every four years - its traditional game plus a National Championship contest approximately one week later.

In a first-of-its-kind collaboration among Division I conferences and football bowl partners, the BIG EAST and Big 12 Conferences — along with Notre Dame — forged a bowl partnership beginning in '06. This agreement assures both BCS Conferences' and Notre Dame's participation in the Gator Bowl and Brut Sun Bowl over a four-year period. The Gator Bowl or Brut Sun Bowl will pick a BIG EAST team after the league's representative to the Bowl Championship Series has been determined. The Atlantic Coast Conference will provide the opposition in the Gator Bowl (CBS) and the Pac-10 Conference will participate in the Brut Sun Bowl (CBS).

The Gator Bowl has the first selection at the conclusion of each season. During the four years of the deal, the BIG EAST (or Notre Dame) will send a team to both the Gator Bowl and the Sun Bowl twice.

The Meineke Car Care Bowl is now in its sixth year with the BIG EAST Conference. The Meineke Car Care Bowl, which is played in Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, N.C., picks after the Gator Bowl or Brut Sun Bowl.

In 2006, the BIG EAST entered into a four-year agreement to participate in the Texas Bowl versus an opponent from the Big 12 Conference. During the four-year agreement, the BIG EAST is guaranteed to play in the bowl game twice (2006 and 2008). The Texas Bowl is played at the state-of-the-art Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas.

The BIG EAST Conference also aligned itself with two new bowls beginning last season – the International Bowl in Toronto, Ontario, and the PapaJohn's.com Bowl in Birmingham, Ala. The agreements give the BIG EAST a total of six bowl deals. In the International Bowl, the BIG EAST faces a team from the Mid-American Conference. In the PapaJohn's.com Bowl, the BIG EAST plays a team from Conference USA.

