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# THE BIG TEN CONFERENCE OFFICE

BY PRUDENCE PENG

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## The Big Ten Conference

Imagine you are in a position setting up a football game, not just any football game, but a football game in which the winning team earns the honor to play in one of the six bowls that comprise the College Football Playoff, including the Rose Bowl Game?<sup>1</sup> Well, that is exactly what happens every year in the Big Ten Football which is organized and supported by a talented team of dedicated and hard working staff. *Known as one of intercollegiate sports' most successful undertakings, the Big Ten is home to a lineage of legendary names and an ongoing tradition of developing strong leaders. Even in its infancy, the conference established*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.indianasportscorp.org/events/2021-big-ten-mens-football-championship-game>

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*itself as the preeminent collection of institutions in the nation, where the pursuit of academic excellence prevailed as the definitive goal.<sup>2</sup>*

## **Athletes First**

It was an honor to talk to Kevin Warren, the Big Ten Conference Commissioner, the day after Thanksgiving. Commissioner Warren was pleasant, friendly and encouraging, making the interview enjoyable. "It has been a lot of work for our staff to get ready for these events, but it has been fun to see these events come together and has been really fun to see fans back in the stands," Warren said. The office team has put thousands of hours of work into the football season. For example, "the office is very prepared for COVID with protocols to ensure that the athletes are healthy and safe." He was humbled and grateful for holding such an inspiring leadership role. "I am constantly in prayer, and just asking God for wisdom and discernment for me to make good decisions." Commissioner Warren also shared "a campaign called 'United As One' to raise awareness on social justice issues" which constructively and collectively recognizes and eliminates racism and hate in our society by creating resources for inclusion, empowerment and accountability.<sup>3</sup> Warren thanked and complimented the office team of 50 members who have worked hard with utilizing their prodigious expertises, such as marketing, branding, communication, data analytic, IT, writing, and social media, just to name a few.

I got the pleasure to be paired up with Megan Rowley, the Associate Director for Big Ten Communications, who has been with the Big Ten office for over five years. Ms. Rowley shared another idea that the office wanted to do was a commercial to talk about mental health which has recently debuted as part of the mental health campaign. Rowley appreciated, "it is delightful being able to handle athletics for the Big Ten, not only for football, but for all of our institutions and 28 sports (14 men's and 14 women's NCAA sanctioned sports). It is very rewarding to know that we are providing experience for our students that we might not have otherwise, and that is a point of pride for our conference."

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<sup>2</sup> <https://bigten.org/sports/2018/6/6/trads-big10-trads-html.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://bigten.org/news/2020/10/23/football-big-ten-conference-launches-united-as-one.aspx>

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## Amos Alonzo Stagg Championship Trophy

When thinking of the name Big Ten, it is natural not to wonder why it is called the Big Ten but not the Big Fourteen when there are fourteen teams competing. "Back in 1896, there were schools that came together and that's when the name was created. So it's been there," Warren clarified. "Think of the Big Ten as a brand name, not the number of teams." When asked what type of food the athletes prefer, Warren said "the schools definitely have a lot of healthy food for the athletes, like lean meats, vegetables, salads, and fruits so they can stay healthy." With health and safety protocols in place, teams can be in their best shape to win the cheers from their supporting fans who are so excited to return to the stadium in person with painted faces and the loudest bolstering screams.

There will only be one winner to take home the 30-pound Amos Alonzo Stagg Championship Trophy that is made of silver which is why it is superlative shiny. Want to know who will be the deserving team? Stay tuned and watch the 2021 Big Ten Football Championship Game on December 4, 2021 with kickoff starting at 8pm ET. In the meantime, Commissioner Warren shared a secret that he and his office team enjoy a replica of the trophy in the office room which he "looks at it in the morning and looks at it at night".

### Writer's Notes:

*As a 5th grader from Sycamore School, I would like to thank Mr. Kevin Warren (Commissioner), Ms. Megan Rowley (Communication Associate Director), Ms. Brett Kramer (Public Relations Director) and everyone from the Big Ten office for the opportunity and support so I can enjoy such a fruitful and incredible experience.*

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