

For Immediate Release
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NCAA Votes To Move FCS Championship to Dallas Suburb

The NCAA announced today that it will move its Division I Football Championship to Frisco, Texas, this year, marking the end of a 13-year relationship with Chattanooga, Tennessee. Local officials expressed disappointment and dismay at the decision. "It is hard to believe the NCAA would walk away from thirteen years of solid game experience to start over, regardless of the site. Having been involved in running this event since the beginning, I am sick over this decision," said Chattanooga Sports and Events Committee President Scott Smith.

On Thursday, Smith led a delegation of Chattanoogaans to present the local bid to the FCS committee at NCAA headquarters in Indianapolis. In addition to Smith, the group included County Mayor Claude Ramsey, UTC Athletic Director Rick Hart, Finley Stadium Director Merrill Eckstein, Sports Committee Chairman Jim Kennedy, Convention and Visitors Bureau President and CEO Bob Doak, and Sports Committee Director of Operations Ben Austin. Southern Conference Commissioner John Iamarino also attended and was part of the presentation.

Chattanooga's bid included a significant increase in the guaranteed payment to the NCAA, doubling the previous amount of \$150,000. "It has been a long time since I have been this stunned. I don't think we left anything on the table, including the financial part," said Mayor Ramsey. Sports Committee Jim Kennedy added, "'I've participated in a lot of presentations in my life, and I thought this one was one of the most complete and polished from virtually every perspective. The data was strong, the images were compelling, all of the presenters were on message, and we had concise answers for their questions. I'm really not sure what else we reasonably could have done."

During the pitch, the local delegation cited Chattanooga's convenient location with a map showing that 74% of FCS schools are located east of the Mississippi River and Chattanooga in the midst of them. In concluding the presentation, Mr. Kennedy reminded the committee, "Chattanooga is an FCS town. This is your national championship; it deserves to be held in a city that will treat it that way." With the championship game scheduled for January 7, 2011, Mr. Kennedy told the committee that it would be the only football game held in Chattanooga on that day, an indirect reference to the fact that Dallas is scheduled to host the FBS Cotton Bowl the same day as the FCS game. Mr. Smith noted that Dallas is also hosting the Super Bowl a few weeks later. "I hope they give these FCS teams the attention they deserve in the midst of all that," he said.

The Chattanoogaans also cited the increase in community support for the game, pointing out that locals purchased more than ten thousand tickets for the 2009 game, and then came out on a cold and rainy night while the two schools, Villanova and Montana, purchased 3,700 between them. Mr. Ramsey applauded the community spirit behind those numbers. "The citizens of Chattanooga and Hamilton County and the area businesses have really stepped up and supported this event over the years, and we were proud to point that out to the committee," the Mayor said.

Although he was disappointed at the NCAA's decision, Mr. Eckstein sounded an optimistic note, saying, "We'll have FCS playoff football back in Finley Stadium pretty soon. The difference is we'll all be cheering the Mocs."

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