

# UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA CAPTURES BIG WEST CONFERENCE TITLE- LOOKS FORWARD TO BOWLING GREEN IN LAS VEGAS BOWL

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — In what lent a dramatic touch to a special press conference, officials of the Las Vegas Bowl on Monday announced that the NCAA will permit the University of Nevada to represent the Big West Conference in the December 18 postseason football game at the 32,000-seat Sam Boyd Silver Bowl.

The Wolf Pack, which captured the Big West title last Saturday, will meet Bowling Green, winner of the Mid-American Conference, in the 5 p.m. PST (8 p.m. EST) contest which will be televised nationally by cable sports network ESPN.

However, before announcing UN as Bowling Green's opponent, bowl officials were forced to wait out an NCAA Administrative Committee ruling on whether the Wolf Pack, which had just five victories against Division I-A competition, was eligible to compete.

NCAA Administrative Regulation 30.9.2 states all postseason bowl participants must have a minimum of six Division I-A victories.

Since the Las Vegas Bowl uses a closed format - representatives are determined by the championships of the conferences - the NCAA, at the request of Big West Commissioner Dennis Farrell, issued a waiver.

"We had a conflict because, as a conference, we had two teams (UN and runner-up San Jose State) which could have capably represented us," Farrell said at a bowl press conference. "In fairness to Nevada, though, the Wolf Pack won the conference outright and deserved the opportunity to go."

While UN finished its regular season Saturday (Nov. 21) with a 7-4 record, two of its victories - over McNeese State and Texas Southern - came against Division I-A opponents. The Wolf Pack posted its five Division I-A wins over Cal-State Fullerton, New Mexico State, Pacific, UNLV and Utah State - all Big West foes.

UN concluded the Big West title race with a 5-1 record, while San Jose State and Utah State tied for second at 4-2. Had not UN been permitted to compete

in the bowl game then San Jose State, which had six Division I-A wins, would have gotten the nod by virtue of its head-to-head victory over Utah State during the regular season.

Farrell said the NCAA was originally going to rule on the matter during a telephone conference call yesterday but moved the decision up to Monday at his urging.

"It saved us a few sleepless nights," Farrell said.

UN coach Chris Ault said he and his team had played a waiting game since Saturday, when the Wolf Pack clinched the conference title following San Jose State's 34-24 loss to visiting New Mexico State.

"When we found out that San Jose State had lost, that was exciting to us because it meant we would be the conference champions with no 'co-' next to it," Ault said. "We had our team banquet on Sunday, so that kept us on a high until we heard the decision."

"It was the right decision," Ault said, "but what I like even more is that the University of Nevada has had something to

do with improving an NCAA regulation."

UN, a force in the Division I-AA ranks for the last decade, will be competing in a bowl game in its first season of Division I-A play. UN also became just the third school - Florida State, of the Southeastern Conference, and Houston, of the Southwest Conference, are the other two - to capture a football championship in its inaugural league season.

While the Big West scenario remained unclear until just before Monday's press conference, Mid-American champion Bowling Green, 9-2 overall, had known for two weeks that it would be playing in the first-ever Las Vegas Bowl.

"We graciously accept this invitation to the Las Vegas Bowl and will do our best in representing the Mid-American Conference and our university," Head

Coach Gary Blackney said. "We have a unique opportunity to win both the final California (Raisin) Bowl and the inaugural Las Vegas Bowl."

The Falcons are two-time Mid-American champions and captured the final California Raisin Bowl last December with a 28-21 victory over then-Big West champion and bowl host Fresno State.

"We seem to be peaking at the right time," Blackney said. "It's great to go back-to-back in

the MAC and be going to the Las Vegas Bowl."

Bowling Green, which finished 8-0 in conference play, became the first team since 1980 to win consecutive Mid-American titles.

The Las Vegas Bowl will be the first postseason football game of 1992. ESPN will broadcast the contest with announcers Ron Franklin, Mike Gottfried and Sharlene Hawkes and will feature a 15-minute pregame show.

## UNLV

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1984) and Jim Sandusky (2nd team, AP, 1981).

Saturday will be the final collegiate game for six UNLV seniors: Parvin, OG John Hurley, OG Lonnie Palelei, RB John Price, DE Tom Riley and LB Mike Smalls.

As always, the football game will be telecast live over KDWN-AM (720) with Ken Korach and Tony Cordasco calling the action from the Silver Bowl. The broadcast will begin with "Rebel Warm-Up" at 12:30 p.m. Kickoff is at 1 p.m.

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