

The BIG EAST Conference

Through the first six years in its configuration of 10 outstanding and nationally acclaimed institutions, the BIG EAST Conference has established itself as one of the nation's exceptional Conferences and a leader in collegiate athletics.

Dynamic leadership has been a staple of the BIG EAST throughout its history. The conference turned "40" on May, 29, 2019, and has always taken a proactive role on many fronts. The 2018-19 academic year proved no different.

The BIG EAST secured its agreement with Madison Square Garden to assure the league will play its men's basketball tournament at the World's Most Famous Arena for the next 10 years.

The University of Connecticut, a member of the conference from 1979 to 2013, was readmitted to the BIG EAST. UConn, which will begin competing in the league again in 2020-21, brings a rich history of academic and athletic excellence. The Huskies' women's basketball program won eight of its 11 national championships as a BIG EAST member. The men's team won three national titles under the BIG EAST umbrella and an additional crown in 2014.

The BIG EAST Conference was chosen by USA Basketball to represent the United States at the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru. It marked the first time a team from a single Division I conference represented the U.S. in the sport of men's basketball in Pan American Games competition. The team exceeded expectations by winning a bronze medal.

In the arena and on the playing fields, the BIG EAST has produced 11 national champions over the past six academic years. Six BIG EAST teams have captured national titles, including two in men's basketball. BIG EAST student-athletes also have won national championships in five individual events.

In the classroom, a record 67 BIG EAST athletic programs were recognized in 2018-19 by the NCAA with Public Recognition Awards for outstanding academic achievement in the previous academic year. By percentage, Villanova led all schools nationally for a second straight year with 77 percent of its squads receiving recognition. BIG EAST schools also produced seven CoSIDA Academic All-Americans.

Val Ackerman, who previously served as founding President of the WNBA, President of USA Basketball and U.S. representative to the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), was named the BIG EAST's fifth Commissioner in 2013. Under her leadership, the BIG EAST has maintained its reputation for achievement at the highest levels and has continued to be influential on the national collegiate landscape, with numerous conference and campus administrators currently serving on important NCAA committees. Ackerman is one of the few sports executives who has

held leadership positions in both men's and women's sports at the collegiate, professional, national team and international level.

In 2013, the BIG EAST began a new era by returning to its basketball-centric heritage. The league's 10 member schools—Butler University, Creighton University, DePaul University, Georgetown University, Marquette University, Providence College, St. John's University, Seton Hall University, Villanova University, and Xavier University—adhere to an unwavering commitment to academic integrity, athletic excellence and community service.

In December of 2012, DePaul, Georgetown, Marquette, Providence, St. John's, Seton Hall and Villanova, announced their intention to separate from the conference's FBS football-playing schools and form an independent association. The seven schools reached an agreement to retain the BIG EAST name and assume the conference's long-term pact with Madison Square Garden to host the BIG EAST Men's Basketball Tournament. The schools also announced the addition of three distinguished institutions — Butler, Creighton and Xavier — and forged a landmark, long-term broadcast partnership with FOX Sports. The BIG EAST moved its headquarters from its original location in Providence, R.I., to midtown Manhattan in New York City. The new era officially began on July 1, 2013.

the BIG EAST has been lauded as a leader in innovative concepts, particularly television, and that reputation continues with the conference's relationship with FOX Sports. The BIG EAST has enjoyed a successful multi-year partnership with FOX Sports and its national cable network FS1. FOX's comprehensive coverage of BIG EAST men's basketball includes the broadcast of all regular-season games on FOX, FS1, FS2 or FOX Regional Networks, as well as the BIG EAST Tournament at Madison Square Garden, college basketball's longest-running postseason conference tourney held at the same venue.

BIG EAST institutions are located in seven of the nation's 36 largest media markets, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Cincinnati.

FOX Sports platforms carry complete coverage of women's basketball regular-season play and the BIG EAST Women's Basketball Tournament. Every Olympic sport championship is also carried on a network or digital platform.

The BIG EAST has also increased the visibility of its school programs with the BIG EAST Digital Network (BEDN). In 2014-15, the league became the first collegiate conference to be hosted on the FOX Sports mobile platform. For the fifth straight year, BEDN aired 225 live events with an emphasis on women's basketball, soccer and Olympic sport regular-season and championship events.

Founded in 1979 by Dave Gavitt, the former Providence men's basketball coach and athletic director, the BIG EAST Conference became a reality in May of 1979. Providence, St. John's, Georgetown, Syracuse, Seton Hall, Connecticut and Boston College formed the original seven-school alliance, and the conference became an immediate national power in men's basketball. While the composition of the BIG EAST has evolved, the focus of its schools has not changed, reflecting a tradition of emphasizing academic strength and fair play.

To complement its athletic successes, the conference launched BIG EAST Serves in 2014 to align with the service missions of the member institutions. Initiatives housed under the BIG EAST Serves umbrella, the BIG EAST Career Consortium and the national partnership with the It's On Us campaign against campus sexual assaults, reflect the conference's commitment to developing the complete BIG EAST student-athlete and making a positive contribution to campus communities and the conference's headquarters in New York. The BIG EAST annually hosts a Well Being Forum to help provide institutional personnel with information, insights and basic training so they can better support the mental and physical health of their student-athletes.

The BIG EAST and Commissioner Ackerman have taken a leadership role in Sport at the Service of Humanity, an initiative created by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture to focus on how sport and faith can drive positive social change. Ackerman was a delegate at the inaugural Vatican conference and has served on an advisory committee to develop the framework and content for the initiative.

The BIG EAST hosts Freshmen Fundamentals, a unique program designed to assist men's basketball student-athletes in the transition from high school to college and the elite level of BIG EAST basketball. The league hosts Transition Game for women's basketball, which assists women's basketball student-athletes in the transition from college player to emerging professional on and off the court.

BIG EAST institutions boast high graduation rates for their student-athletes, and the league has always been able to boast that many of its best athletes are also its best students. Creighton volleyball's Taryn Kloth and Marquette basketball's Allazia Blockton were the conference nominees for the 2019 NCAA Woman of the Year award.

The conference, which crowns champions in 22 sports, had league teams earn a total of 18 NCAA team berths and 23 individual NCAA invitations in 2018-19. In men's basketball, all 10 teams participated in the postseason for the first time in conference history. Men's basketball teams have earned 32 NCAA invitations in six years, averaging 5.3 per season.

Current BIG EAST men's basketball programs have enjoyed extraordinary success. Villanova has won NCAA Championships in 2018, 2016 and 1985. Georgetown and Marquette also have won

the national title. Butler, DePaul, Providence, St. John's and Seton Hall have all made the Final Four. The BIG EAST placed three men's basketball teams in the 1985 Final Four — Georgetown, St. John's and Villanova—the only time this has occurred in NCAA history. Over the past 16 years, Butler, Georgetown, Marquette and Villanova have reached the Final Four, with Villanova making three trips and Butler two. Xavier has advanced to the Elite Eight three times.

The BIG EAST has achieved recent success in other sports as well. A BIG EAST team has won the NCAA women's cross country championship four of the last 10 years (Villanova twice, Providence and Georgetown once), with one runner-up finish (Providence). Creighton men's soccer has advanced to the NCAA College Cup twice in the last six seasons and Providence made it in 2014. Georgetown's women's soccer team reached the College Cup in 2018 and 2016. As an affiliate member in field hockey, Connecticut has won three national championships in six years. Denver, as affiliate member in men's lacrosse, won the NCAA crown in 2015.

In the 40 years since the original league opened its doors, BIG EAST teams have won 41 national championships in eight different sports with 145 student-athletes winning individual national titles in the league's history.