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Sugar Bowl bitter over alliance

□ The game in New Orleans no longer gets the SEC Champion.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — It used to be so easy for the Sugar Bowl. The Southeastern Conference champion played the highest ranked team the bowl could attract, sometimes with the national championship at stake.

Not anymore. Since the bowl alliance took over, the only thing known for sure is that the Sugar Bowl won't decide this year's national title. And with no automatic bid for any conference, making the selection is tougher than ever.

"Now we start off not knowing who either of the two teams will be," said Sugar Bowl executive director Troy Mathieu.

With only a few games left in the regular season, Mathieu said he still doesn't know which teams will be playing in New Orleans on New Year's Eve.

The Fiesta Bowl is expected to have a 1-2 showdown between Nebraska and Florida. The Orange Bowl and Sugar Bowl, which make up the rest of the alliance, then get to pick from a pool of teams that include Notre Dame and the champions or co-champs of the Atlantic Coast (Florida State), Big East (Virginia Tech or Miami) and Southwest (the Texas-Texas A&M winner) conferences.

After the Fiesta gets the first two picks, the Orange selects third and fifth. The Sugar gets the No. 4 and No. 6 selections.

"We're in a reactive mode to the Orange bowl on both picks," Mathieu said. "They have the first move and then we get what's left. We can't control our destiny."

However, the Sugar Bowl can control the Orange Bowl's destiny.

The Orange Bowl apparently wants No. 6 Notre Dame and No. 22 Miami, although No. 8 Florida State also may be under consideration.

The Sugar seems to favor Florida State and Texas, if the

College Bowl lineup

| Division I-A games All times EST | SUGAR Alliance (selections 4 and 6) New Orleans, Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m. (ABC) |
|--|---|
| LAS VEGAS Nevada (9-2) vs. Toledo (10-0-1) Las Vegas, Dec. 14, 9 p.m. (ESPN) | OUTBACK Penn State (8-3) vs. Auburn (8-3) Tampa, Fla., Jan. 1, 11 a.m. (ESPN) |
| ALPHA Kansas (9-2) vs. UCLA (7-4) Honolulu, Dec. 25, 3:30 p.m. (ABC) | CITRUS Tennessee (10-1) vs. Ohio State (11-1) Orlando, Fla., Jan. 1, 1 p.m. (ABC) |
| COPPER Air Force (8-4) vs. Texas Tech (8-3) Tucson, Ariz., Dec. 27, 9 p.m. (ESPN) | GATOR Miami (8-3) or Virginia Tech (9-2) vs. Clemson (8-3) Jacksonville, Fla., Jan. 1, 1 p.m. (NBC) |
| ALAMO Texas (9-1-1)-Texas A&M (8-2) loser vs. Michigan (9-3) San Antonio, Dec. 28, 8 p.m. (ESPN) | COTTON Colorado (9-2) vs. Oregon (9-2) Dallas, Texas, Jan. 1, 1:30 p.m. (CBS) |
| SUN Washington (7-3-1) vs. Iowa (7-4) El Paso, Texas, Dec. 29, 2:30 p.m. (CBS) | ROSE Northwestern (10-1) vs. Southern California (8-2-1) Pasadena, Calif., Jan. 1, 5 p.m. (ABC) |
| INDEPENDENCE LSU (8-4-1) vs. Michigan State (6-4-1) Shreveport, La., Dec. 29, 8:30 p.m. (ESPN) | ORANGE Alliance (selections 3 and 5) Miami, Fla., Jan. 1, 8 p.m. (CBS) |
| HOLIDAY Colorado State (8-3) vs. Kansas State (9-2) San Diego, Dec. 29, 8 p.m. (ESPN) | FIESTA Nebraska (11-0) vs. Alliance (selection 2) Tempe, Arizona, Jan. 2, 8:30 p.m. (CBS) |
| LIBERTY East Carolina (8-3) vs. Stanford (7-3-1) Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 30, noon (ESPN) | |
| CARQUEST Syracuse (8-3) vs. North Carolina (6-5) Miami, Dec. 30, 7:30 p.m. (TBS) | |
| PEACH Virginia (8-4) vs. Alabama (8-3), Arkansas (8-3) or Georgia (8-5) Atlanta, Dec. 30, 8 p.m. (ESPN) | |

Longhorns beat Texas A&M. However, Virginia Tech also is believed to be on the Sugar's list.

If the Orange decides it wants a Notre Dame-Florida State game, that complicates things for the Sugar Bowl.

If the Sugar wants Virginia Tech, that complicates things for a Notre Dame-Miami Orange Bowl because only one Big East team can play in the alliance.

"Some people assume we'll make our pick to mess up the Orange, but they're mistaken," Mathieu said. "We're in the business of making our own plans, not trying to affect another bowl."

But what if the Orange takes Miami with its first pick? Or what if, to head off the Sugar Bowl, the Orange picks Florida State? If

that happens, Mathieu admits the Sugar would be interested in Notre Dame with its huge television and crowd appeal.

"Every bowl is always interested in Notre Dame," Mathieu said.

No. 13 Virginia Tech doesn't have the national appeal of the other schools, but the Hokies are still a possibility for the Sugar Bowl, Mathieu said.

"They bring an attribute every bowl likes — they travel well," Mathieu said. "In other words, they bring people to our city and have a positive impact on the economy. That's why bowls are set up."

With tickets going from \$50 to \$100 this year, the Sugar is anxious not to have empty seats for the game.

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