

Athletic Director Gene Smith, Senior Deputy Athletic Director Diana Sabau Discuss Ohio State's Budget Deficit



Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith and senior deputy athletic director Diana Sabau met with the media on Wednesday morning to discuss the athletic department's \$107 million projected deficit and associated budget cuts amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Here's a bullet-point recap of what they had to say:

- Smith said head football coach Ryan Day and head basketball coach Chris Holtmann will take voluntary 5 percent pay cuts.
- Smith on revenue estimates: "I'm going to be quite frank with you, they mean nothing at this point."
- Smith said the budget would change if Ohio State is unable to play all nine scheduled games this fall.
- Smith said he is not on the Big Ten's television committee, as had been previously reported by the Big Ten. He is not sure what the TV revenue will be this fall as a result.
- Smith also noted they won't receive concert or parking revenue.
- Smith is hopeful Ohio State will have double-digit home basketball games this season, but acknowledged attendance could be "zero or significantly less depending on what's happening at that time with the virus."
- Smith said cutting sports was "not a major part of the conversation." Noted the university takes pride in having 36 sports. "At the end of the day, those student-athletes derive the same benefits (as football and basketball)."
- "We're self-supporting and we will continue to be self-supporting." Smith noted the athletic department could receive an internal loan from the university, though.
- "Everything we do now is being rethought."
- Smith said they've been reducing the number of employees in the athletic department and not filling openings since January and that the 25 full-time positions that were cut from the athletic department were not specific.
- Smith said Ohio State is negotiating with original non-conference opponents Bowling Green, Oregon and Buffalo, but if they can't work something out, the contractual obligations they have with those schools will be taken out of the media rights with the Big Ten, saving the athletic department more than \$3 million.

- Asked if thought Day and Holtmann should be taking more than 5 percent pay cuts, Gene Smith said he is “100 percent” with what they’re taking
- Smith said Ohio State has never had to take out an operational loan like they plan to offset the deficit. Usually, fundraising and pledges take care of financial issues. “We don’t want to be a burden. We want to be an asset.”
- Smith said none of the 25 positions that were eliminated were coaches.
- Though he understands why some have asked about a potential “rainy-day fund,” but Smith said that’s just something he doesn’t support “philosophically.”
- Smith said they’re exploring options to fly into road games this fall the day of the game and fly out that night, as well as taking busses to shorter destinations to save money. “There are a lot of things we could look at and will.”
- Smith said Ohio State will provide further details regarding basketball season, media rights and spring schedules for the postponed fall sports in the coming weeks.
- Sabau, meanwhile, did not field any questions.

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