

National Collegiate Football Play-off

Bringing together twelve college football teams, which have excelled during an exciting regular season in a play-off of eleven highly competitive games where the winner can prove its superiority on the field and indisputably claim its title, National Champion.

The Idea

Twelve schools make the play-off, the six highest ranked teams by the "Overall Ranking System" (ORS) comparable to the BCS ranking system but void of an exclusive strength of schedule factor (the polls and computer rankings already factor in strength of schedule), and then the highest ranked conference champions which are not already included in the field by the first condition. Conferences can choose the manner in which to best determine a conference champion in the case of a tie in the standings. All conference races must be completed by the last weekend in November or if December has five Saturdays, the first weekend of December. The four highest ranked teams as determined by the ORS poll would receive a "bye" during the first round. The next four highest ranked teams would host a first round game normally the first weekend of December against one of the remaining schools, which should be assigned in order to reduce travel expenses of the schools' fans. Second round games continue the following weekend in the tradition of the bowls by billing the winners of first round games against the four top ranked schools. These four bowls, spread around the country in traditional bowls such as the Holiday, Alamo, Motor City, and Citrus bowls, would be held the second weekend of the December. These bowls place the highest-ranking teams in the bowls closest to their school and pit them against a school that also is geographically close. The next weekend would be open to allow for finals, rest and holiday. The semi-final games would take place the final Saturday in December in two sites of the same town (e.g. Bank One Ball Park and Sun Devil Stadium in the Phoenix area) All current BCS sites, Phoenix, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Miami have more than one stadium capable of holding almost simultaneous games. The final game will be the following weekend in a huge bowl in the same town, essentially producing a Final Four atmosphere for a full week. Other bowls would not be affected and could still hold their bowls in their normal times matching teams that did not qualify for the playoff system.

Five Considerations

Financial profitability

Clearly money talks and should be the first factor considered. Precedence shows that a playoff system can be easily marketed and interest is always sky high. The NFL's, NCAA basketball's, NBA's play-off games always have a better television rating than the televised regular season games. Attendance is always better during playoff games and even in the neutral site games of March Madness sellouts are the norm. Although I feel gambling is a dangerous by-product of athletic competition it is worth mentioning that the huge numbers of non-sports fans that entered betting pools during playoff time show how contagious and excitable a playoff format can be. Nothing bodes better for financial books than more overall interest in the product. Fans, advertisers, bowls, and universities

will recognize the increase in interest of non-conference, regular season and play-off games.

Fairness and justice

How could interest not explode when every team in America has a true chance to win a championship? This is regardless of whether a team plays in the largest conference or smallest conference. At the beginning of the year every team can realistically prove itself worthy of a shot at playing for the national championship. At the end of the regular season every worthy team will have the chance to play for a national championship. What is a worthy team? If the school is ranked among the top schools in the country and/or is the best team in the conference to which it pertains. The play-off does not go overboard on the numbers though. Sending too many teams into the playoff will lengthen an already long and demanding season and cheapen the regular season. This balance between top ranked teams and conference champions will promote fairness while ensuring the best teams will compete for the championship.

Well-being of the athlete

Much has been said of the well being of the athlete and rightfully so. His academic and physical health must be considered. December is full of not only football but also finals. Scheduling play-off games geographically will minimize time away from class and studying. The two-week break between the quarterfinal and semifinal is scheduled in such a way to avoid stress during many universities normal finals period as well as allow more free time during the holiday season. Also the number of teams in the playoff minimizes the wear and tear of continued playing to a small amount of student athletes.

History of the game

A few of the traditions threatened by a playoff system include everything represented by the bowls including more than just the athletic contests. Everything from the parade, the charitable events, the banquets to the player's gifts etc. should continue. By allowing the games of the playoff to remain in the bowl format and ensuring that the schools involved in the bowls are the nearest geographically things will continue as normal as possible. Geography is an important factor in that the short time span from actually knowing who will be in the game and the chance for multiple tournament games might strain the pockets of ardent fans wishing to cheer on their teams in person. Other bowls outside the play-off must continue in their strong tradition as well. By maintaining the number of teams in the play-off at twelve other bowls will continue to have excellent teams for their match-ups. Next the tradition of the regular season meaning a great deal toward the national championship must be maintained and even enhanced. Keeping the number of teams low will prove to keep the importance of the regular season. Conference races will be even more important and the quality of non-conference games will go a long way to ensure your placement in the play-off.

Past National Champions

Ultimately the powers to be will continue to be the powers to be unless they can see the benefit to them as well. Without a doubt the many schools that benefit most by the current BCS system have always fielded highly competitive teams. Consequently their

tradition must be considered in any new playoff format. The BCS schools will be pleasantly surprised by this 12-team format not only for the overall interest it will raise in the college football, but the system will ensure that their deserving teams will always be included in the playoff and home-field and geographic advantage will be given to the most deserving teams, which have historically been teams from the current BCS conferences. Finally ranking systems will ensure that not all conference champions will make the play-off excluding the chance they might take positions that deserving teams from predominate conferences deserve. The play-off also allows the national champion to demonstrate its superiority by defeating the most worthy opponents not because people and computers determine their opponent but because that team defeated all challengers.

The end

The system also appeases many arguments against a playoff system. The season will continue to mean something. Only teams who have excelled each and every Saturday during the season will have a quality chance to reach the National championship. In fact it will make every game even more important during the season in terms of playoff seeding and conference championship. The great tradition of the bowls will continue strong and in effect will be strengthened. The bowl committees will still be able to provide quality events associated with the football game and the players involved. The academic impact will also be minimal, as only eight teams will be involved in postseason play during the normal finals period. The fact that first and second round games are matched up according to geography will also avoid excessive absence from campus and the player's educational lives. Tourism, television ratings, and fan interest will be through the roof, ensuring that the tradition, profitability, and health of college football will last many more decades.