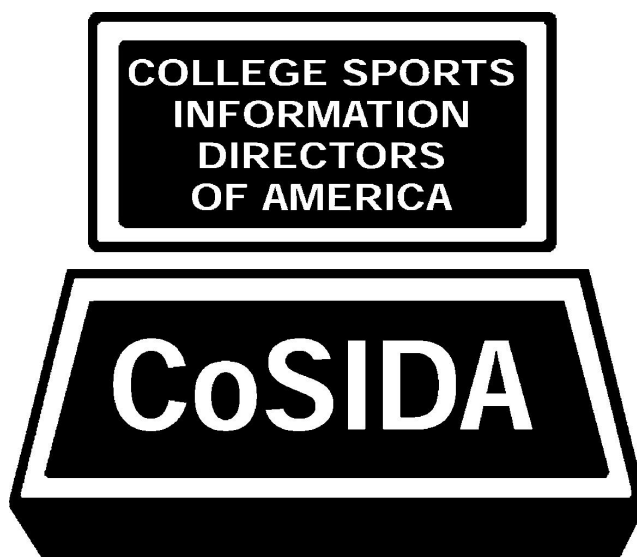


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AUGUST 31, 2006

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Article published Aug 31, 2006
Aug 31, 2006

NBA dreams should wait for talent to be developed in college

Florida built a national championship roster around three recruiting classes that netted just one McDonald's All-American.

If anything, it shows star power on the summer AAU recruiting circuit doesn't always translate into success at the next level. High school, summer ball and college are different entities, some designed more for flash and marketing than the objectives of winning a championship.

And, there's something to be said for developing players once they arrive on campus.

That's not to say that Florida coach Billy Donovan would no longer pursue a player as talented as Carmelo Anthony - as long as they are not too blunt about their intentions.

"I'm probably not interested in a guy that's telling me over the phone, 'Coach, I'm coming for one year. I'm gone. I just want to go to a place where I can play and showcase what I can do and enhance my draft status and go pro.' " Donovan said.

To do that would undermine a style of play that Donovan covets, one of selfless players willing to sacrifice for team goals.

On the other hand, Donovan recruits in the real world. The recent NBA Draft age-limit change to 19 hasn't produced the mass exodus to prep schools that some predicted. It hasn't produced shoe-company sponsored barnstorming tours.

College basketball is still the current best vehicle for exposure. Most Division I coaches, Donovan acknowledged, know the high school players who have the ability to make the leap to the NBA after one college season.

"If I've got a guy who says: 'Hey, coach. I want to go to college. I want to win. I want to be part of a team. I want to be coached. I want to get better. I want to improve. And if the opportunity presents itself to leave, I'm going to look at that.' " Donovan said. "I think that's an honest and fair assessment."

Corey Brewer is the lone McDonald's All-American on the current roster. But it's not like his teammates were considered slouches coming out of high school. Chris Richard was Mr. Basketball in Florida. Al Horford, Joakim Noah and Lee Humphrey all were ranked in the 25-100 range by various recruiting analysts.

Point guard Taurean Green was considered more of a reach, but Donovan knew what he was getting into, having watched him participate in every one of his summer camps since eighth grade.

Brewer, Noah and Horford all could have left after their sophomore seasons, but stuck around because they all enjoy playing together and want to compete for another national title.

Donovan's current 2007 class of verbal commitments sets up similar to the 2004 class of Noah,

Horford, Brewer and Green. Of the five, point guard Nick Calathes and forward Chandler Parsons are considered potential McDonald's All-Americans.

Guard O.J. Mayo, the top-ranked recruit in the country who has been compared talent-wise to Anthony and LeBron James, said he intended to visit Florida over the summer, but has since committed to USC. Mayo made news this week when he left North College Hill Prep in Cincinnati to enroll in high school in his hometown of Huntington, W. Va., for his senior season.

Contact Kevin Brockway brockwk@gvillesun.com.



<http://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/college/basketball/bal-sp.coaches31aug31,0,6305580.story?coll=bal-sports-headlines>

From the Baltimore Sun

Walking away not easy for coaches

They try to get out of basketball, but keep getting pulled back in

By Paul McMullen
sun reporter

August 31, 2006



The 2005-06 Florida State basketball media guide includes a photo of two coaches who have taken time off from the game.

Leonard Hamilton, who squirmed through an idle year after losing the Washington Wizards' job in 2001, is in command as he dissects a Seminoles win.

The man holding the microphone looks forlorn, seeming to yearn for a team of his own to talk about. Bobby Cremins, who left Georgia Tech with a textbook case of burnout and spent six seasons doing television commentary, finally got his wish last month, when he was hired by the College of Charleston.

"Television and charity golf filled a big void, but I missed the highs and lows of coaching," Cremins said. "I was busy, but the bottom line is, this thing is in my blood."

That also apparently goes for Don Nelson, who spent last season on the Dallas Mavericks' payroll as a consultant, but just took the Golden State Warriors' job for a second time. Nelson, 66, and his wife are both cancer survivors, but after a year of travel with her, he again has decided to visit airports with oversized men.

From the brevity of Nelson's respite to Rollie Massimino's being unable to stay away a second time and Wizards assistant Tom Young's taking off 12 seasons -- twice as long as Cremins -- some basketball coaches prefer the aroma of dried sweat over stopping to smell the roses.

Though early retirement is the goal for many baby boomers, competitive men who often have spent nearly 50 years in the sport find that being a spectator or commentator brings them nowhere near the satisfaction of directing the game from the bench.

Cremins was in his mid-30s when he revived a moribund Georgia Tech program and took the Yellow Jackets to their first Final Four appearance in 1990. The program lost its momentum, however, and after Georgia Tech missed a fourth straight NCAA tournament in 2000, he resigned at age 52.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/sports/college/basketball/bal-sp.coaches31aug31,1,99280,print.stor...> 8/31/2006

He wasn't as visible as ESPN's Steve Lavin and Rick Majerus, who seem to be mentioned for any opening, but Cremins kept his foot in the door as an analyst on Atlantic Coast Conference games. A planned year off turned into three and then six, as Cremins never formally interviewed for a college coaching job but received several offers over the phone.

"The first couple of years, I didn't miss it, but then three, four months ago, something told me I had to get back in," Cremins said. "You don't get calls in late June or early July, but then Gregg Marshall pulled a Bobby Cremins."

In 1993, Cremins planned to leave Georgia Tech for South Carolina, then changed his mind. In late June, Marshall was introduced as the new College of Charleston coach, then reneged and decided to stay at Winthrop. The day before Cremins turned 59, the College of Charleston held another news conference to announce his hiring.

Instead of playing golf near his Hilton Head, S.C., home on a late July day, Cremins was in Orlando, Fla., attending an Amateur Athletic Union tournament, watching Baltimore's Team Melo and raving via his cell phone about Syracuse-bound Donte Green.

Forced out after one dismal season in charge of the Wizards in 2001, Hamilton took his payoff, turned down several offers to coach and returned to Miami, where he had spent the 1990s coaching the Hurricanes. He rode his bicycle, jogged and exercised religiously, but the first extended vacation of his life was a drag. After a single season off, he took the Florida State job.

"I was looking forward to doing nothing, but that didn't last long," Hamilton said. "I felt more stress not coaching than I did coaching. I thought I could go to Miami, sit in the stands and enjoy games, but that didn't work. I had recruited some of those kids, and it was like I was still their coach. When I watched at home on television, I found myself screaming at the refs and players.

"We all found out that life without basketball was something that Leonard Hamilton was not going to enjoy. I'm not alone. I think most basketball coaches find it hard to get away from the game."

Though Hamilton doesn't "golf, hunt or fish," Cremins lowered his handicap to single digits, and there was a three-month stretch a few years ago when Young was a scratch golfer.

Young recalled a Florida tournament when he was paired with Chuck Daly, who had coached the Detroit Pistons to two NBA titles, when an errant tee shot put them in Massimino's backyard.

"Rollie wasn't home; he was making a go of it at Cleveland State," Young said. "I remember thinking, 'We're here enjoying the sun, and he's up north in the cold.' Now that Rollie's back in it again, that blows my mind."

Best known as the architect of Villanova's upset of defending champion Georgetown in the 1985 NCAA final, Massimino left Philadelphia, had two nondescript seasons at UNLV, two years out of the game and then a sorry seven-year stretch at Cleveland State. After a 20-loss season, the first of his career, he retired in 2003.

Massimino occupied himself with his 16 grandchildren and an assortment of college programs where he could drop in, "criticize, critique and get my fix," but it wasn't enough. When an old coaching friend, the athletic director at Northwood University in West Palm Beach, Fla., offered him the chance to start a basketball program, Massimino couldn't resist.

Northwood will be a provisional member of Division II next season, but it will play exhibitions at Miami and defending NCAA champion Florida, and its home opener will be against Villanova.

"I figure if we win one, we'll get nationally ranked," Massimino said. "Seriously, it's not as easy as I thought. There are financial constraints, only six scholarships. We're ordering equipment, uniforms and trying to market at the same time. I would not have come in if they had a program. The idea of starting from scratch has its appeal."

Young is in the running for longest sabbatical from basketball coaching.

A take-it-to-the-hole guard, Young started on the first Maryland team that won an ACC tournament, in 1958. He coached Rutgers to its only Final Four appearance in 1976, when his point guard was Eddie Jordan. After Jordan's playing career ended, he broke into coaching under Young, at Rutgers and Old Dominion. Young was in his 50s when he left college coaching in 1991, and in his 70s when Jordan made him a Wizards assistant in 2003.

"When I left coaching, I never anticipated coming back," Young said. "I was content. If I wasn't playing golf, I was practicing, and that helped fill my competitive urges. The only possibility for me to return was Eddie getting a head coaching job. When that came, I didn't hesitate to join him."

Young will turn 74 on Sept. 17. The game bears little resemblance to what he found at College Park in 1952, but some things haven't changed.

"Whether you're coaching in college or the NBA, one or two guys are going to be a pain in the butt," Young said. "It always comes down to the same thing: playing time."

Like players, coaches need that action, too.

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Published: 08.31.2006

Opinion by Greg Hansen : Wildcat stuck in NCAA's red tape

Academic check moves slowly, penalizing Ross

Opinion by Greg Hansen

Coveted UA freshman cornerback Devin Ross graduated from high school 97 days ago. He was so impressive in training camp that Mike Stoops called him "fabulous."

But you won't see Ross on Arizona's game-day depth chart this week. He has a jersey, No. 6, but in the eyes of the NCAA he does not exist.

Ross remains lost in the NCAA's academic forest.

The NCAA Clearinghouse, entering its 13th season as the omnipotent judge of initial eligibility of all student-athletes, has yet to sanction Ross' membership on Arizona's football team.

Ninety-seven days after he graduated from Avondale Agua Fria High School, Ross has been pulled from practice and placed in limbo.

"It's a never-ending process," Stoops said a few days ago. And we thought the coach was exaggerating.

Some of Arizona's most coveted football recruits, from Parade All-American tailback Leon Callen to seven-year NFL linebacker DaShon Polk, were similarly withheld from practice. Polk wasn't cleared until early September of the 1995 season. Starting UA defensive lineman Jonathan Turner missed the entire 2003 season because of clearinghouse issues.

A year ago, UA women's basketball recruit Malia O'Neal was not permitted to participate in the first week of workouts — that's mid-October — because the clearinghouse was tardy in its review.

And it's not just Arizona. It's everywhere. Purdue cornerback Terrill Vinson has not worked out with the Boilermakers since last week. Why? The NCAA Clearinghouse lost his papers.

It's widespread. It's every sport.

"It's such a secret process, almost conducted in a cloak of mystery," says UA volleyball coach Dave Rubio, who has gone through Ross-type delays almost every year. "It makes you wonder if the NCAA has enough staffing."

In theory, the NCAA Clearinghouse is a good idea. But the execution is flawed, not just from the NCAA's end, but from an athlete's former high school, which has a greater and more immediate purpose than to assign academic personnel to communicate with the NCAA.

Why is it flawed?

"Think of the thousands of athletes entering school every year, in all sports, from Division I down," Rubio says. "It's an overwhelming endeavor. And not all of it should be on the shoulders of the NCAA. The (marginally qualified) athlete is also at fault."

Myles Brand, executive director of the NCAA, last week proposed a significant change in the initial-eligibility system.

Said Brand: "We need to place academics and eligibility first — before these students are involved in official recruiting visits and offered scholarships."

That is indeed a better way to do business. Of the 85 Division I football schools in BCS conferences, only eight — Boston College, Georgia Tech, Florida, Iowa, Northwestern, Ohio State, Texas and Stanford — had all of their incoming freshmen and transfers qualify academically this season.

Opening day

? Who: BYU at Arizona

? When: 7:15 p.m. Saturday

? TV: TBS

? Radio: 1290-AM, 107.5-FM

Most of the rest have a player or two still awaiting clearance.

Arizona has three in that category: Ross, defensive lineman Braylon Broughton and transfer pass rusher Gabe Long. Ross appears to be the only one with a possibility of being cleared this season.

It's not that Ross is a deficient student or doesn't project as a capable college student. His case is unusually complicated because he attended two high schools in 2005-06 (Southern California's Rancho Cucamonga and Agua Fria) and another, Los Osos High, in California, a year earlier.

The uncomplicated explanation of Ross' situation is that the NCAA Clearinghouse views each high school's curriculum — 14 required core courses over a four-year period — independently.

The clearinghouse, for example, accepts 85 courses at Rancho Cucamonga and 64 at Agua Fria. It does not accept 16 RCHS courses — including four in English, two in history and one in economics — while at AFHS it declines credits in 14 courses, including three computer classes and two in journalism.

If Ross took a drafting or criminal justice class, or one in music theory at RCHS, it won't help him get on the football field. All are denied by the clearinghouse.

So, yes, it's confusing and time-consuming, much of it dependent on a high school counselor supplying the clearinghouse with data just as a new school year opens, the busiest time of the counselor's calendar.

Some of the decisions — eligible or not — have lasting ramifications.

Imagine how good Arizona's 1998 basketball team (30-5) could have been had Stephen Jackson been on the roster. The Wildcats would almost surely have won a second straight NCAA championship.

But the Indiana Pacers' wingman, who has since scored 5,402 points in the NBA, never did get in a Wildcat uniform; the NCAA Clearinghouse would not accept a pre-algebra course he took in prep school.

Jackson instead enrolled in a junior college and Arizona was one shooter short in a 1998 Elite Eight loss.

Now it is Devin Ross who sits and waits, in anguish, as the clock ticks on his and Arizona's future.

Opening day

? Who: BYU at Arizona

? When: 7:15 p.m. Saturday

? TV: TBS

? Radio: 1290-AM, 107.5-FM

? Contact Greg Hansen at ghansen@azstarnet.com or 573-4362.

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Posted on Thu, Aug. 31, 2006

Don't rule out compassion

By Wendell Barnhouse
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

Ray Ray McElrathbey is a redshirt freshman cornerback at Clemson. According to NCAA rules, his life would be better if his mother was dead and he wasn't a scholarship athlete.

McElrathbey is 19 going on 49. His mother, who lives in Atlanta, has been addicted to crack cocaine for more than a decade. His father has a gambling problem and lives in Las Vegas.

This summer, McElrathbey requested and was granted temporary custody of his 11-year-old brother, Fahmarr, who moved to Clemson, S.C., to stay in an off-campus apartment with his older brother/surrogate father.

Unless you're an Oklahoma quarterback on the take, a football scholarship doesn't exactly cover the cost of living for one person, let alone two.

A recent story on Ray Ray and Fahmarr in the *Charleston Post and Courier* elicited an outpouring of generosity. People wanted to help with money, food, school supplies, toys.

It was the kind of response and support that makes you proud to call yourself a human being.

Folks wanted to help a young man who was trying to do the right thing.

The NCAA rules said no.

McElrathbey is a scholarship athlete. That means no "extra benefits." Fahmarr goes to school with several children whose fathers are assistant coaches at Clemson. He can't accept rides to or from school from those families -- that's an extra benefit.

Clemson offensive coordinator Rob Spence and his wife asked if they could become Fahmarr's foster parents. Nope. That's an extra benefit.

In this case, the NCAA's "extra benefits" rule means an 11-year-old goes wanting. The only way any person connected with the Clemson athletic department can help Ray Ray and Fahmarr is to request a waiver.

Clemson asked if it could set up a trust fund to handle the donations. Nope. A trust fund can only be used if there has been a death in the family.

If Ray Ray were just a regular student and his story had been told, he and his younger brother could benefit from the kindness of strangers. If their mother was dead, the NCAA would allow a trust fund.

In recent years, the NCAA has patted itself on the back for its "kinder and gentler" approach to student-athletes. If a student-athlete needs to go home for a funeral or needs a winter coat, he can avail himself of the Student-Athlete Special Assistance Fund and the Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund.

McElrathbey can apply for money from both, but Clemson's compliance director said that neither would provide enough to help raise a grade schooler.

"You get a little frustrated," Clemson coach Tommy Bowden said Wednesday. "Everybody says they're in [college sports] for the betterment of the student-athletes. This is a young man whose difficulties have been documented. I understand there are rules, but you would think there are times there are exceptions to a rule.

"Helping a young man, who doesn't have a car, take care of his younger brother, I don't see how that's a recruiting advantage."

The compliance folks in the Atlantic Coast Conference office told Clemson's director of compliance that McElrathbey's story is "sad
<http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/sports/colleges/15406012.htm?template=contentModules/printstory...> 8/31/2006

but not unique."

Here's what's sad (but hardly unique): Myles Brand's total compensation as NCAA president is \$870,000. Eight other NCAA executives make more than \$255,000 per year.

Nowhere in the 576 pages of the NCAA's Division I Manual are the words "compassion" or "common sense."

The guys sitting in the corner offices in Indianapolis need to figure out a way where the rules become more like guidelines. Ray Ray McElrathbey is the kind of role model scholarship-athlete the NCAA needs to help, not hinder.

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University loses its No. 1 fan

By [Joe Lyons](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Thursday, Aug. 31 2006

When Dr. Dennis C. Spellmann died Wednesday morning, Lindenwood University lost its president and its No. 1 sports fan.

Dr. Spellmann, 70, believed strongly in the bond between athletics and academics and saw the 38 sports offered on the St. Charles campus as a positive reflection on the school overall. He was a regular at sporting events on campus.

"Dr. Spellmann viewed sports as a integral part of the Lindenwood experience; he saw the combination of athletics and academics as a way to help educate the whole person: mind, body and soul," university spokesman Scott Queen said. "Dr. Spellmann was quite a football player in his day at Missouri Valley College, and he enjoyed watching the athletes on campus compete. He took great pride in the successes of our teams."

Dr. Spellmann had battled cancer for several years, undergoing surgery for it in 2004. He spent his final days in the president's home on campus.

"It's a tremendous loss not only for the athletic programs but for Lindenwood as an entity," Lindenwood athletic director John Creer said. "Dr. Spellmann was extremely supportive of the athletes here, and we have the first-class facilities to reflect that. He wanted to make sure that Lindenwood's athletes did things the right way – no shortcuts – and that they were training and competing in an environment that always allowed them to do their best."

Under Dr. Spellman's guidance, Lindenwood renovated or built top-level athletic facilities such as Harlen C. Hunter Stadium, Robert F. Hyland Performance Arena and Lou Brock Sports Complex.

"I think our facilities are as good as any in the NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics)," Queen said.

In recent years, Lindenwood has hosted NAIA championships in women's soccer, wrestling, swimming and diving and women's ice hockey.

Creer arrived on campus in 1991 and coached the men's indoor track and field squad to the school's first NAIA title in 1998. Since 2002, when the wrestling team captured title No. 2, Lindenwood has won 19 national championships.

"I can remember calling Dr. Spellmann after we won that first title; he was so excited," said Creer, in his sixth year as Lions' AD. "The next day, when I walked into his office, he was still just as excited, trying to set up a press conference so that our athletes would get some recognition."

While the future is unclear, Creer is hopeful that athletics will continue to play a major role in the education process at Lindenwood University.

"For the time being, we'll continue as we always have," he said.

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Posted on Thu, Aug. 31, 2006

Game kicked off return to normalcy

USC, Mississippi State return to scene tonight of first football game following 9/11

By JOSEPH PERSON
jperson@thestate.com

Liz McMillan has been to hundreds of football games, beginning with her days as a USC student, but never one as moving.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which essentially shut down America for a week, a grieving nation tried to figure out when it was appropriate to return to everyday life.

On some level, a football game between USC and Mississippi State helped many begin that solemn trek back to normalcy.

After all games were postponed the weekend following 9/11, USC and Mississippi State met on a Thursday night in Starkville in a nationally televised game that was the first major sporting event following the attacks.

The scene at Scott Field would become commonplace that fall: snipers standing in the upper portions of the stadium; an emergency command center set up outside; and long lines of fans waiting to have their bags checked before entering the stadium.

But what McMillan remembers most — what she never will forget — is the pregame tribute in which players from both teams formed a ring around a giant American flag while the national anthem and "God Bless America" were played.

"You saw those players, and in that moment in time they were unified over something that was just so much bigger than the game," said McMillan, general manager of Gamecock Sports Properties.

"You looked around and you didn't see a dry eye. It touched everyone."

Five years later, USC returns to Scott Field tonight for its first game in Starkville since that emotional night. With a near-capacity crowd expected and ESPN trucks in town for one of the season's first games, the atmosphere figures to be different than the mostly solemn scene surrounding USC's 16-14 win in 2001.

"To have the first sporting event on TV after 9/11, we knew that the nation was watching," Gamecocks color analyst Tommy Suggs said. "It was an interesting time, a lot of different emotions flying within you."

One of those was fear.

Because the 9/11 terrorists had used commercial airliners as bombs, former USC running back Ryan Brewer said many players were uneasy about flying. Those fears were heightened when the team's charter, scheduled to leave Columbia on Wednesday, was delayed a day due to mechanical problems.

"Everybody was nervous to fly with what happened, then the flight gets messed up," Brewer said. "Even though we were on our own flight, it was nerve-racking for a lot of people."

After undergoing more-extensive security checks at Eagle Aviation than customary, the USC travel party boarded the charter Thursday morning and enjoyed an uneventful flight to Starkville.

Suggs recalled arriving at Scott Field about four hours before the start of the game to allow for increased security measures. Many of the 43,579 fans also arrived early, waiting while security personnel poked through purses, bags and binocular cases.

"I just remember there being a general hush around the stadium," said Todd Ellis, USC's sideline reporter that season. "People filed in early, but they weren't quite as rowdy. I think they were just waiting on game day and the game to go forward."

In the visitors' locker room, Brewer said Lou Holtz's pregame remarks included the role his team would play in restoring the country's confidence.

Like McMillan, Brewer said he was moved by the pregame ceremony. Instead of the usual jumping and yelling that accompanies a team's entrance, USC and Mississippi State players walked quietly onto the field and circled the flag.

During a moment of silence, someone in the stands shouted an obscenity directed at Osama bin Laden. But it could not ruin the moment for Brewer, who admitted wiping away tears.

The game felt almost anti-climactic to some in attendance. Bulldogs fans still clanged their traditional cowbells, but maybe not quite as loudly.

Backup quarterback Corey Jenkins came off the bench in the third quarter and used his scrambling ability to lead USC on a seven-minute drive, ending with Daniel Weaver's decisive field goal.

But the atmosphere on the flight back to Columbia was subdued.

"Our country was still somewhat confused at that time. You just didn't know what all was going on or why," Suggs said. "So I think there still was a solemn feeling on the airplane, although we'd won. It wasn't as exciting and as joyous as you would have thought.

"I think our players and all of us were still suffering from 9/11."

Reach Person at (803) 771-8496.

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washingtonpost.com

Mismatches Pad the Record, Pay the Bills -- and the Marys

By Mike Wise
Thursday, August 31, 2006; E01

Three days before the slaughter -- three days before college football's now 12-game regular season opens in earnest -- the lamb is on the other end of the line. He is laughing at his certain demise.

"In my alumni newsletter I wrote, 'Hey, David got Goliath,' " said Rocky Hager, the coach of Division I-AA Northeastern, which will be fed to the Virginia Tech lions on Saturday in Blacksburg much the same way William & Mary will be sacrificed at Maryland. "Of course, we're not going in there thinking we have an automatic chance to win. But you never know."

Hager actually told his kids that the swifter and larger Hokies put on their pants one leg at a time, just like his players. He knows it's cliché, older and more tired than premier programs scheduling Meek State to pad their win-loss records. But what's a I-AA coach supposed to say? "We haven't had new sideline phones in 10 years. Hit somebody!"

When the NCAA decided that its experiment of allowing teams to schedule 12 regular season games should be made permanent, the idealists liked the prospect of their school having another game to become bowl eligible with at least six wins -- never mind that every 6-6 team might not go to a bowl game. They also envisioned one more week of Ohio State vs. Texas, or maybe Nebraska at USC.

But instead, they got this bang-up, kickoff weekend: Akron at Penn State, UAB at Oklahoma and North Texas at Texas. Really, for all the NFL preseason whining, imagine sitting through 3 1/2 hours of Florida Atlantic at Clemson?

(Do you know there is no betting line for Northeastern vs. Virginia Tech and Maryland vs. Walter & Madge? The NCAA sanctions these games, but we can't wager on them? Criminal, just criminal.)

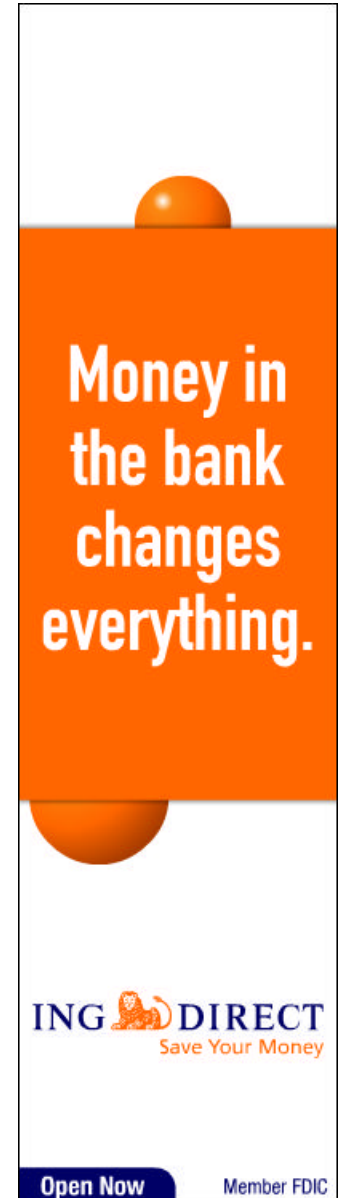
(Editor's Note: Mike Wise will be making several sophomoric references to William & Mary. He means no disrespect to that fine institution of higher learning and/or its proud athletic tradition. But come on, William & Mary? Is that a school or a prom couple from Culpeper?)

These mismatches used to be ghoulishly referred to as body-bag games. The term came from the stretch of a notion that kids from small schools would be routinely sacrificed and carted off the field for the larger, financial concerns of their university. Today the terminology is more practical. Payday, baby.

"We have to call it our moneymaker," Hager said. "Being honest, if we didn't have that 12th game, we would have some budgetary difficulties. We need to have some revenue brought in through football, and this is one way we can do it."

Frank Beamer's people paid Hager's people between \$300,000 and \$400,000 for the Northeastern kids to risk emasculation in Lane Stadium. Northeastern will deposit that check in its athletic department account so others

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don't bounce in the spring. Economic reality, which is fine.

But the problem comes along when the big schools further load up on inferior competition and try to sell benefactors on the idea that bringing in Wilbur & Martha, Middle Tennessee and Florida Atlantic is good for the program. Short-term financial gain for Maryland? Yes. Long-term prominence? Not so much.

Maryland lost a kid named Antonio Logan-El to Penn State last year. The Forestville native, one of the country's premier offensive line prospects, was originally staying home until Logan-El showed up at the ESPN Zone in Baltimore to announce his college choice. When the words "Penn State" came out of his mouth, the Terps fans in attendance got nasty. Instead of stupidly calling the kid "Traitor!" they should have demanded Maryland do something about losing the best kids in its back yard to a place such as Penn State: Why not work out a home-and-home deal with the Nittany Lions?

In a good year for both programs, that game doesn't have only national appeal; it becomes a recruiting tool like the West Virginia game for Maryland. The Fridge beats JoePa, more prospects stay home. Maybe some Pennsylvania kids cross the state line to play in College Park. Trust us, the Terps will not lose any recruits to Wyatt & Melinda.

Maryland and Virginia Tech aren't alone in the ACC in ensuring they win at least three games while playing a particularly brutal conference schedule. Boston College is loading up on Central Michigan, Maine and Buffalo, which is so bad it is commanding \$600,000 per game to be a nonconference punching bag. No matter what happens in Monday's season opener against conference foe Miami, Florida State's Bobby Bowden can take solace in pummeling Troy, Rice and Western Michigan.

About the only ACC guys with any nonconference nerve are Georgia Tech's Chan Gailey, who opens with Notre Dame, and -- I can't believe I'm typing this -- Virginia's Al Groh. The beady-eyed, uptight soul in Charlottesville opens the season at Pittsburgh, a real nonconference donnybrook. For that, the GrohMustGo.com server gets shut down until at least December.

I realize this is awfully snarky and unsentimental. And I know I have failed to mention all the kids from small schools who one day will boast about playing in 50,000-plus-seat stadiums against big-time programs such as the Hokies and the Terrapins.

As Jimmie Laycock, the venerable William & Mary coach who had a young Ralph Friedgen on his first staff, reminded me: "I've had kids come back from reunions and talk about what it meant to play a Penn State or a Virginia Tech, what that felt like to be on that field with those football players."

Laycock is right. Maybe I'm missing the big picture: all those proud Maryland players who can come back 20 years from now and wax nostalgic about "the day we beat Wilbur & Martha."

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Posted on Thu, Aug. 31, 2006

DOUBLE EXPOSURE

The four major bowls will rotate as national title host after their own game

BY JEFF SHAIN
jshain@MiamiHerald.com

Just when you think you've got the Bowl Championship Series figured out, they go and change it again. And these are no small tweaks.

No longer will the national title be decided in the Orange, Sugar, Fiesta or Rose bowls. A separate championship game joins the four principals, rotated annually among the sites and played a week after New Year's.

The Fiesta Bowl takes first crack this season at the "double hosting" concept, with the BCS Championship set for Jan. 8 in Glendale, Ariz.

"I think it's going to be an interesting model to watch," said Eric Poms, the Orange Bowl's new executive director.

In essence, the new plan calls for host committees to put on their usual New Year's bowlapalooza -- team outings, block parties, halftime show -- then do it all again seven days later.

The Orange Bowl's turn comes in January 2009.

"It'll be a challenge, but we have a tremendous opportunity," Poms said. ``We all know how much South Florida has an affinity for college football."

The expanded system also creates two more at-large berths, with an eye on giving greater access to teams from second-tier leagues whose champions don't receive automatic entry.

Of the 64 BCS slots available over its eight-year history, 63 have gone to members of the ACC, SEC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 or Big East, or to Notre Dame.

The lone exception was Utah two years ago, and it required an unbeaten season to make the cut.

Under the new guidelines, the BCS will open one slot for a champion finishing in the top 12 of the final standings. There's also a clause lowering the bar to 16th if it finishes ahead of an automatic league champion.

That would have been the case last year. Texas Christian finished 14th in the final list but still eight spots ahead of ACC champion Florida State.

However, it raises the question of whether the public has a stomach for such Cinderellas.

Utah's Fiesta Bowl journey was very well received, though some of that might be attributed to the novelty factor and Utah's proximity to the Phoenix area.

How would TCU play in South Florida? Or perhaps Conference USA's Central Florida?

"I'd have to see a specific example of who's involved," Poms said.

``If Central Florida had one of those years, it could work very well for the Orange Bowl."

One thing the Orange Bowl can count on is the ACC champion. Bowl officials recently signed a deal designating the ACC as its "host" league for the upcoming four-year BCS cycle.

The Orange Bowl previously had its choice of the ACC or Big East champions, but that was when Miami and FSU were in separate leagues.



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I-AA foes don't hurt schedules

By [CARTER STRICKLAND](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 08/30/06

Athens — Mark Richt doesn't care if Western Kentucky is a Division I-AA or I-A program, and he's about ready to jump down the throat of anyone who does.

"We are going to play as hard as we can. And if they don't, we will take their [butt] out of the game," the Georgia coach said in an un-Richt-like tone. "That is all there is to that."

Like Richt, the computers in the Bowl Championship Series formula don't seem to care much that Georgia's season-opening opponent plays at the I-AA level.

Even though several of those computers give a lot of weight to the strength of schedule factor, the men who run them say playing a lower-level team won't come back to haunt the Bulldogs later this season when the BCS standings are calculated.

"In my formula, playing a good I-AA [team] is the equivalent of about the 85th team in I-A," said Richard Billingsley, who runs one of the six computer systems used in the BCS. "They get some credit, but it is small."

Small as in if Western has a decent year, it could be rated similarly to playing a lower-echelon BCS conference team such as Washington, Syracuse or Indiana, Billingsley said.

All six computer formulas used by the BCS treat I-AA teams slightly different. Billingsley makes the I-AA team equivalent to I-A teams in his rankings and plugs in that information.

Jeff Sagarin, Peter Wolfe and Kenneth Massey actually rank all Division I teams — no matter what level they play in.

"The computer doesn't know if it is I-A or I-AA," Sagarin said.

Anderson & Hester treats a I-AA team just like a bad I-A team.

"So the Bulldogs won't get much credit for the win because it doesn't merit much," Jeff Anderson said. "But it will be treated essentially the same as if they played, say, the No. 115 I-A team."

Wes Colley, of the Colley Matrix computer system, doesn't plug I-AA teams into his formula at all.

<http://ajc.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=I-AA+foes+don%27t+hurt+schedules...> 8/30/2006

"So the penalty to UGA will be fairly small," Colley said. "In fact, it can be to some advantage in that playing a I-AA team is better than playing a horrible I-A team since the horrible I-A team so adversely affects strength of schedule."

Sagarin said a team would fare better in the computer rankings if it were to play a 9-2 Western Kentucky instead of a bad I-A team, like an 0-11 Kent State. In fact, Sagarin now ranks Western Kentucky 125th, four spots ahead of Louisiana-Monroe, a I-A team Georgia played last season.

Where playing Western might hurt Georgia is in the human polls used by the BCS (USA Today coaches, Harris Interactive).

"In the human polls, perception is everything," Billingsley said. "When you are looking at a sportswriter or a coach making a personal decision where he is going to rank a team, they are more likely going to look at the I-AA and say, 'Hey, that is a gimme.' "

That means a team such as Georgia, which is No. 14 in the coaches poll, could have a hard time jumping ahead of a one-loss team with a strong schedule, such as Southern Cal. The Trojans' nonconference slate includes games with Arkansas, Nebraska and Notre Dame. The Pac-10 went to nine conference games when the regular-season schedule was bumped to 12 games.

But Georgia isn't alone in its scheduling of I-AA opponents. Twelve teams in The Associated Press preseason top 25 have one game against a lower-division team. So does Georgia Tech, which faces Samford in the second week of the season.

That factor, along with the length of the schedule, should keep Georgia from being penalized too much for scheduling a I-AA opponent.

Said Wolfe: "With all I-A teams playing 12 and in some cases 13 games in the regular season, plus in the case of some conferences an extra championship game, the effects of a single I-AA game will be diluted."

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Tudor:

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Modified: Aug 30, 2006 03:14 AM

Pay attention: It's a new BCS

CAULTON TUDOR, Staff Writer

The powers that be have revised the Bowl Championship Series formula again, which is like saying 400 tons of mud have been dumped into the Mississippi River.

This season, and beyond, we'll have five BCS postseason games – an increase of one – and four of them will be televised by Fox.

The Rose Bowl Presented by Citi, however, is the television property of ABC.

Are you with me so far?

The other BCS games – Tostitos Fiesta, FedEx Orange, Allstate Insurance Sugar and the plain-old inaugural Bowl Championship Series National Championship – will be on Fox.

Can you hear me now?

Most of the BCS berths again will be hogged by teams from the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and Southeastern conferences.

But – this is important, so pay close attention – there also could be room for Notre Dame and a champion from one of the following leagues: Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West, Sun Belt and Western Athletic.

That will happen if the champion from one of those mid-major conferences finishes the regular season ranked No. 12 or higher in the final BCS standings. It can also happen if a mid-major champion is ranked No. 16 or higher in the final BCS standings and has a ranking higher than a champion of the high-major conferences.

Simple, huh?

But don't get confused about the status of the champs from the big six leagues. Come heck, high water or algebra IX, the champs from all of those leagues will have a berth somewhere among the five BCS games.

For example: Say Duke wins the second annual Dr. Pepper ACC Championship Game but can climb no higher than No. 17 in the final BCS standings. Even so, the Blue Devils would get a BCS berth somewhere, probably the Orange.

Some ... assembly ... required.

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OK, let's quickly crack Da Notre Dame Code.

Notre Dame will be guaranteed a BCS berth if it is ranked No. 8 or higher in those final BCS standings. But – get this now – Notre Dame will still rake in its share of the BCS financial loot, even if it finishes the season with a 2-10 record and Charlie Weis has to change his name to Charlie Horse.

In fact, Notre Dame could go 2-10, lose 42-10 to North Carolina and would still be assured of getting as much BCS money – roughly \$1.5 million – as the Tar Heels would get for being a member of the ACC.

Why? Well, it's a complicated story that more or less goes all the way back to a book written by Adam Smith in 1776.

The title of Smith's book was "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations." Notre Dame may seem like a perfectly normal university in most respects, but where football is concerned, Notre Dame is a nation unto itself. Hence, Notre Dame gets a share of the national payout pie.

There was a time when I honestly didn't think the BCS would fly. Way back when it started in 1998, my first reaction was that the only football fans capable of understanding such a convoluted formula would be the folks who play in the weekly office pool at NASA.

Boy, was I ever wrong. This thing is so easy to understand now that there's no conceivable way big-time college football will ever try something so exotic as a postseason playoff.

The only thing I don't get after this latest round of simplification is why the BCS National Championship game doesn't have a titled sponsor. That just makes so little sense that I hereby propose that the grand finale be renamed the $E=MC^2$ BCS Big Basic Bowl Presented by Stephen Hawking.

Columnist Caulton Tudor can be reached at 829-8946 or ctudor@newsobserver.com.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL COMMENTARY

Foley, UF a hit again -- for now

Mike Bianchi
SPORTS COMMENTARY

August 27, 2006

GAINESVILLE -- There was a time not so long ago when Jeremy Foley's life was a sad country song.

His wife left him. He lost his best friend. His dog got hit by a car.

And I'm so lonesome I could cry.

"I've had more fun in my life, that's for sure," the University of Florida athletic director said during a recent interview at his office amid a thriving athletic complex he helped build from scratch.

Foley has just been named the Athletic Director of the Year by Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal. His men's basketball team just won the state's first national championship. He outmaneuvered Notre Dame to hire Urban Meyer to coach a football team that is ranked in the Top 10 and appears to be on its way back to national prominence. His overall athletic program is one of only two -- Stanford is the other -- that has been ranked in the top 10 of the national all-sports standings for each of the past 22 years.

Foley shakes his head and laughs.

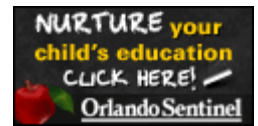
"None of that's going to matter if we're not successful on the football field this fall," he laughs. "If we're 6-6, I don't think our fans are going to say, 'Jeremy was Street & Smith's AD of the Year so we really can't criticize him.' "

Foley knows this state's fickle fan base and cranky columnists perhaps better than anybody. He's spent his entire career at UF, starting as an intern in the ticket office back in 1976. He's parked cars and loaded trucks. He's been a favorite son and a redheaded stepchild.

For the longest time, he was a golden boy; a fan favorite; good ol' Jeremy. Then Steve Spurrier left for the NFL, and a few of the critics blamed Foley. Then Foley hired his best friend, Ron Zook, to replace Spurrier, and those few critics turned into a deluge of dissenters.

The message board mudslingers referred to him as Jeremy "Fooley!" Media muckrakers referred to Zook as "Foley's folly." You'd have thought Zooker was the worst personnel move since Nixon hired Agnew.

"My light dimmed in a hurry," Foley says. "Wow, what a learning experience that was. The criticism was hard to take because it was all so new to me.



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"The hiring of Ron certainly didn't turn out like I envisioned, but to say it was a total failure, I think would be unfair to the effort Ron put in. It's not like we went 2-9. That's total failure."

With the noise in the system transformed into a cacophony of criticism, Foley fired Zook after 2 1/2 seasons. And he hasn't heard from his former compadre since then. Friend or no friend, Zook learned what every coach who's ever worked for Foley knows from the get-go: Win or else.

Losing is not tolerated. Sometimes, winning is not tolerated. Greatness is expected.

Foley has fired baseball and softball coaches after seasons in which they advanced to NCAA regionals. Just making the postseason is not good enough at Florida, where the facilities, salaries, resources and commitment are second to none.

"I don't like that reputation [of being quick to fire coaches], but the bottom line is I think this university deserves the best," Foley says. "There's no reason we shouldn't be successful at every single sport at the highest level. Do you have to win national titles every year? No, of course not. It doesn't work that way. But do you need to be in the hunt? Yes. Do you need to have a program considered one of the best in the country? Yes."

The lobby wall outside Foley's office is taken up by plaque after plaque commemorating Florida's 14 Southeastern Conference all-sports championships in the past 15 years.

Inside his office, the walls are covered with framed newspaper articles commemorating national titles in golf, tennis, soccer and, of course, football and basketball.

Has anybody come farther faster? Foley has risen back up to the top after the sudden fall from grace. He's now the only Division I AD in the modern era to supervise a program that won national titles in football and men's basketball. He just signed a lucrative contract extension a few months ago worth more than \$500,000 a year in cash, prizes and perks.

Jeremy Foley's life is now a different kind of country song.

Back in the saddle again.

Mike Bianchi can be reached at mbianchi@orlandosentinel.com.

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Really Seldom Syndication

AUGUST 28, 2006



RSS has marketers' attention. Most US employees do not know what it is.

By James Belcher - Senior Analyst

When eMarketer last looked at Really Simple Syndication (RSS) in March, the little-used technology had caught the interest of marketers eager to use it as an end run around spam filters.

Since then, more data have been released suggesting that RSS is...a little-used technology with which marketers hope to make an end run around spam filters. Research by Media Buyer Planner and Workplace Print Media shows that merely 2% of US employees subscribe to RSS feeds, and only 9% know what such feeds are.

RSS Feed Use and Knowledge among US Employees, 2006 (% of respondents)



Note: n=1,000; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Workplace Print Media, August 2006; MediaBuyerPlanner, August 2006

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This is the same as RSS feed knowledge by US adult Internet users overall as of May-July 2005, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

US Adult Internet Users' Knowledge of the Meaning of Select Internet Terms, May-June 2005 (% of respondents)

	Have a good idea what term means	Not really sure	Never heard the term
Spam	88%	10%	3%
Firewall	78%	19%	3%
Spyware	78%	19%	3%
Internet cookies	68%	27%	5%
Adware	52%	39%	9%
Internet "phishing"	29%	55%	15%
Podcasting	13%	64%	23%
RSS feeds	9%	65%	26%

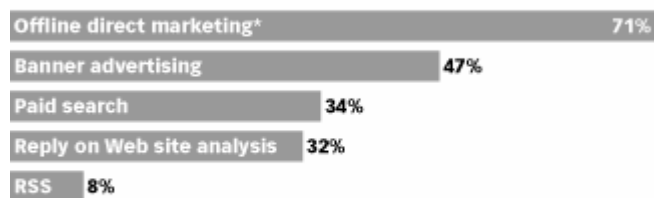
Note: n=1,336; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, July 2005

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Ongoing low awareness and usage of RSS is mirrored in Marketers' use of the channel. According to [Jupiter Research](#), in a study commissioned by CheetahMail and [BtoB](#) magazine only 8% of US e-mail marketers used RSS as of June 2006.

Marketing Tactics Used by US E-Mail Marketers, 2006 (% of respondents)



Note: *includes print and catalog marketing

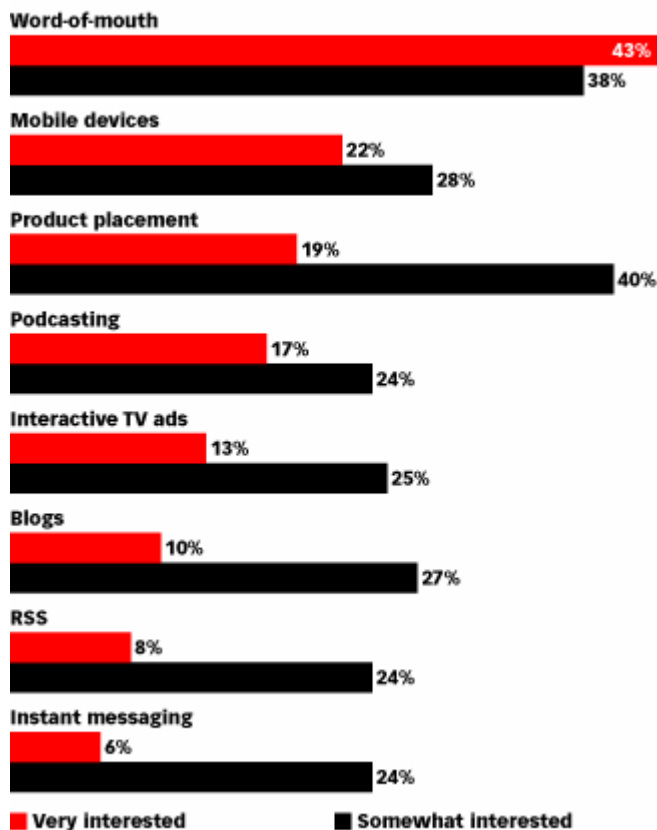
Source: JupiterResearch commissioned by CheetahMail, June 2006; BtoB Magazine, June 2006

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This low actual usage by e-mail marketers belies more widespread interest in the technology. [GfK NOP](#), in a study commissioned by [Epsilon Interactive](#), found that nearly a third (32%) of US marketers were either "interested" or "very interested" in advertising via RSS.

Emerging Media on which US Marketing Executives Are Interested in Advertising, 2006 (% of respondents)



Source: GfK NOP commissioned by Epsilon Interactive, June 2006

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So what will it take for more US Internet users, both at home and at work, to adopt RSS? As with many other PC applications, bundling RSS software with new versions of operating systems and Internet browsers is the most likely path to mass adoption for RSS. With both Microsoft Windows and Apple OS 10.5 set for release during Q1 2007, there is a fresh chance for computer users to be introduced to RSS. Internet browsers may be updated even sooner and more often to include RSS browsing. What is less realistic is to expect the average PC user to download a

separate RSS-reading application. It is one thing to expect browser users to import RSS feeds from their existing list of favorites. It is another to expect them to learn about the technology on their own, and use it within a separate application. This is doubly true for advertising — even opt-in e-mail — as it is with news.

For more information about up-and-coming advertising channels, read the eMarketer report [Podcasting: Who's Tuning In?](#).

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Monday, August 28, 2006

Good writing can ease hard feelings



STEPHEN WILBERS

Writing for business

Columnist

wilbe004@umn.edu

Well, it happened again. Another apology letter – this one from **Northwest Airlines**– and, like most well-written apology letters, it followed a five-part formula:

- Goodwill opening.
- Apology for empathy statement.
- Explanation of the problem.
- Good news or bad news.
- Goodwill closing.

The author was Kristen Shovlin, director of customer care and refunds.

Like most effective customer relations and PR letters, this one had a carefully worded opening and closing. It defined and affirmed relationship between the writer and me, the reader.

When you are writing to apologize – or to deliver any message in a delicate situation – your goal in your opening is to create good will. Your goal in your closing is to affirm relationship.

See what you think of the letter, written in regard to a two-hour delay that caused some travelers (though not me) to miss their connecting flights in Minneapolis:

"On behalf of all the employees at Northwest Airlines, I would like to take this opportunity to offer you our immediate and sincere apology for the disruption of your travel on July 25, 2006."

Combining goodwill opening and apology, Ms. Shovlin creates an effective tone by invoking the name of the organization while also addressing me in the first person ("I"), thus lending credibility to her personal-sounding voice. Not a bad start.

"We recognize that travelers want dependable and convenient service and we realize that we did not achieve that standard for your flight. We thank you for your patience and understanding."

Again, well done – a great example of empathy, or seeing a situation from the other person's viewpoint. I did feel affirmed, but to be honest, I actually hadn't been all that patient and understanding. Still, I appreciated the ploy: It's standard practice to state the desired behavior and then thank the reader for exhibiting it. So far, so good.

Now for the explanation of the problem:

"On July 25, a problem developed with a computer system that facilitates communications between

Northwest's main distribution system and some of our airport computer systems" – then some detail about bringing the system back up and using redundant systems and manual backup plans "to minimize the impact on our customers."

Enough. If Ms. Shovlin had gone on much longer, her explanation would have begun to sound like a lame excuse. The trick here is to say enough, but not too much.

Now for the good news: 7,500 miles added to my WorldPerks account. OK, I accept. And, yes, I do feel better about the delay.

The self-congratulatory tone of the goodwill closing was tempered by a second admission that a problem had occurred:

"I pledge to you that we are dedicated to providing good service. Our on-time record speaks for itself. Unfortunately, in this situation, our reliability suffered.

"Thank you for your support as a WorldPerks member and for flying Northwest Airlines."

My pleasure. Now, what to do with those 7,500 extra miles? Hawaii in November?

CONTACT US: Write to Wilbers at P.O. Box 19114, Minneapolis, MN 55419, or send e-mail to wilbe004@umn.edu.



August 27, 2006

Fox Is Newest Student of the College Game

By [RICHARD SANDOMIR](#)

Suddenly, Fox is in love with college football, swept off its feet by the Sooner Schooner and Buckeye Nation.

How else to explain moves that seem anathema at Fox, where the emphasis has been on pro sports, with college sports a lesser priority on cable.

The first move, made nearly two years ago, will soon become obvious to viewers. Fox acquired, for nearly \$83 million annually through 2010, four-fifths of the Bowl Championship Series: the Fiesta, Sugar and Orange Bowls, and a new national title game, to be played Jan. 8 in Glendale, Ariz.

ABC Sports, which had had a grip on the B.C.S. since 1999, held on to the Rose Bowl.

The second move, made in June, had Fox teaming with the Big Ten Conference to create the Big Ten Channel, which will debut sometime next year. It will be of, by and for the Big Ten, intended to appeal to its large Midwestern footprint but also to alumni around the country.

Fox's entrance into college sports, and especially the B.C.S., is a strong signal that a new, well-financed player exists in an elite arena long dominated by ESPN/ABC, CBS and NBC, which put its entire focus on [Notre Dame](#) home games. It creates the possibility that Fox will drive up the cost of the type of regular-season packages it wants to add when conference deals come up for negotiation.

It is also the sign of a broader evolution in college sports that has its foundation in television. ESPN has spun off ESPNU. Three-year-old CSTV, devoted to a broad assortment of college sports often ignored by networks, was acquired by CBS last November for \$325 million. CSTV recently started a regional sports network with the Mountain West Conference.

"College football has really rebounded over the past five or six years," Kevin O'Malley, an independent TV consultant to the B.C.S., said. "Ratings for national games are good. When you sell college football, you're selling against the N.F.L and baseball in October, so it's been in a tough position with national advertisers. But I think the game has remained strong. I think regular-season football has been undervalued and to a certain extent continues to be."

That increasing value was seen recently when ESPN and ABC renewed their Big Ten deal for \$100 million annually for 10 years, up from an average of about \$60 million in the previous contract. The increase is because of ESPN's need for elite programming and the new media rights it received.

The Big Ten calculated that it could satisfy ESPN's needs while simultaneously carving out enough games to induce a partner, eventually Fox's cable networks business, to become a partner in the Big Ten Channel.

In that way, Jim Delany, the Big Ten commissioner, divined that he could raise enough money for the 11 conference members to pay for the increasing cost of scholarships and stadium construction and renovations.

"There's no enthusiasm for funding these programs by the central administrations, so basically we're on our own," he said. "We plotted out our expenses for the next 10 or 15 years, and there was no way our revenues were expected to grow in a way that would let us stay in the black."

The ESPN deal, with its upfront cash, and the new channel with Fox, which promises a yearly rights fee and future profits, will give Big Ten athletic departments at least \$7.5 million more annually. "We have maybe three or four athletic departments in red ink, and this sops it up," Delany said.

In assessing its B.C.S. and Big Ten deals, Fox wanted only major properties. The B.C.S., despite being criticized for its structure and rankings system, has emerged as a major postseason force. Fox craves big events with big ratings, which the B.C.S. provides. Last January, the four bowls were seen by 88.4 million viewers, with 35.6 million watching Texas defeat Southern California in the Rose Bowl, the one bowl Fox will lack.

"David Hill and I have talked about the B.C.S. probably four years ago, saying that when it came up, we wanted to be in a position to take a run at it," said Tony Vinciguerra, the president of the Fox Networks Group, referring to Hill, the chairman of the Fox Sports Television Group. "We started by creating relationships with the people at the B.C.S."

Kevin Weiberg, the Big 12 commissioner and former B.C.S. coordinator, was not surprised by Fox's interest. Fox already carried Big 12 games on Fox Sports Net, and he joined Hill at a Nebraska game.

"I'd seen his passion throughout the day, and I felt Fox would have a strong level of interest," Weiberg said. Fox was fortunate that ESPN and ABC, having agreed to renew their rights to the Rose Bowl for more than \$30 million a year, bid too low for Weiberg to have any further discussions.

Fox swooped.

But this was a different deal than the previous one. The B.C.S. had added a separate national title game, to be played by the first- and second-ranked teams, who will play several days after the final bowls. It will always be at the same site as one of the other games, this season at the Fiesta Bowl, which will be played at the Arizona Cardinals' new stadium.

While the B.C.S. received more money, it amounted to only a 7 percent increase over the previous deal. The lack of a big rise in fees is because of increasing access to the bowl games to 11 conferences, up from six, which may diminish the attractiveness of the Fiesta, Orange or Sugar Bowls.

"The feeling of the networks is that you're adding a game in a tough marketplace, but it might not be a great game," O'Malley said. "The perception is you added something, but not something valuable enough."

Fox, for its money, thinks it bought a profitable package of games that can be promoted during the N.F.L. season, baseball postseason and throughout its prime-time programming, although its two most prominent shows, “24” and “American Idol,” do not start until later in October. Already, Vinciguerra said, Fox has sold 50 percent of its advertising for all four years.

It is hamstrung, to a degree, by a lack of regular-season college games on which it could promote its bowl games and prepare a crew of announcers.

Only one, Thom Brennaman, has so far been chosen.

“It’s not my choice, but it’s the landscape,” Ed Goren, the president of Fox Sports, said. “It’s a challenge. It’s like our first Daytona 500, where we didn’t have a regular season to get up to speed with. We had to come out of the chute firing.”

If the B.C.S. was a concept that Fox could grasp easily, so was the Big Ten Channel. Fox Sports Net is a confederation of regional sports networks carrying professional and college events. The template is an easy one to copy for the Big Ten Channel, even if its ambitions are decidedly national.

“College football generates a level of passion you don’t see in other sports,” Bob Thompson, the president of Fox Sports Networks, said. “With its long history of successful schools and teams, and the size and strength of their TV markets, the Big Ten is extremely important.”

And Vinciguerra suggested that Fox could end up with four channels like the Big Ten’s.

The conference covers a region with 17 million cable and satellite households, most of which the channel expects to serve. But it also expects to persuade cable operators to carry it nationally. “This is not a regional sports network, because it’s got a much bigger footprint,” Thompson said. “We can be successful distributing to those 17 million homes, but that’s not the intent.”

It will start out being distributed mainly to satellite subscribers of DirecTV, which is 34 percent owned by News Corporation, Fox’s parent.

Delany laughed when he was asked if having the Big Ten Channel provided an unfair advantage over other conferences and universities.

“Is it more or less unfair than Notre Dame’s advantage?” he said. “More or less unfair than the A.C.C. tournament? Things have evolved.”

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Easier access to BCS

Four at-large berths: Top-16 rank could put MWC team in series

By Michael C. Lewis
The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune

Two years ago, the Utah Utes proved that teams from the Mountain West Conference could catch lightning in a bottle and reach the Bowl Championship Series.

Starting this season, teams such as Utah and Brigham Young from outside the six "power" conferences will enjoy easier access to the BCS. There now are four at-large berths available as part of the addition of a specific national championship game to be played the week after the original four BCS games - the Rose, Orange, Fiesta and Sugar bowls.

"The gate has opened a little bit wider for us," Colorado State's Sonny Lubick said.

Whereas the Utes had to finish the regular season ranked in the top six of the BCS standings to earn an automatic spot in the Fiesta Bowl, teams from outside the the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and SEC can do so now by finishing in the top 12.

They also can earn an automatic berth if they rank in the top 16, and rank better than one of the champions from the top six conferences.

"You still have to just about go unbeaten," Utah's Kyle Whittingham said. "You may sneak in there with one loss, that's about the most margin of error that you have. . . . But it's hard to get into a BCS game with more than one loss no matter what conference you're coming from. Certainly, we're in favor of the new standards."

With good reason.

Had the new rules been in place since the BCS formed in 1998, at least five teams from lesser conferences would have beaten the Utes to the BCS - and others, such as Brigham Young in 2001, might have had a shot.

The Cougs were unbeaten after 12 games that year, yet had been eliminated from consideration for the BCS before the season was over. Emotionally devastated, they watched their ranking plummet after they were blown out of their regular-season finale at Hawaii - a game that might have turned out differently had the Cougars still had a shot at the BCS.

"Now, you have much more of a chance to go to a BCS game than there was before," said Chuck Long, the new coach at San Diego State. "We've already sold that part of it in recruiting. A lot of kids want to hear that, and we tell them, 'Hey, we have as good a chance as anybody.' "

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Bowl Schedule

Dec. 19 - Poinsettia Bowl at San Diego, MWC vs. At-large, 6 p.m. (ESPN2)

Dec. 21 - Las Vegas Bowl, MWC vs. Pac-10 No. 4/5, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 22 - New Orleans Bowl at Lafayette, La., Sun Belt champion vs. CUSA, 6 p.m. (ESPN2)

Dec. 23 - Birmingham (Ala.) Bowl, Big East vs. CUSA, 11 a.m. (ESPN2)

Dec. 23 - New Mexico Bowl at Albuquerque, MWC vs. WAC, 2:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 23 - Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl, CUSA No. 4 vs. MWC, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 24 - Hawaii Bowl at Honolulu, Pac 10 No. 6 vs. WAC, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 26 - Motor City Bowl at Detroit, MAC vs. Big Ten, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 27 - Emerald Bowl at San Francisco, ACC vs. Pac-10 No. 4/5, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 28 - Independence Bowl at Shreveport, La., Big 12 7/8 vs. SEC, 2:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 28 - Holiday Bowl at San Diego, Pac-10 No. 2 vs. Big 12 No. 3, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 29 - Music City Bowl at Nashville, Tenn., ACC vs. SEC, 11 a.m. (ESPN2)

Dec. 29 - Sun Bowl at El Paso, Texas, Big 12 or Big East vs. Pac-10 No. 3, noon (CBS)

Dec. 29 - Liberty Bowl at Memphis, Tenn., SEC vs. CUSA champion, 4:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 29 - Insight Bowl at Tempe, Ariz., Big Ten vs. Big 12, 7:30 p.m. (NFL Network)

Dec. 29 - Champ Sports Bowl at Orlando, Fla., ACC No. 4 vs. Big Ten No. 4/5, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 30 - Meineke Bowl at Charlotte, N.C., Big East or Navy vs. ACC, 11 a.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 30 - Alamo Bowl at San Antonio, Big Ten vs. Big 12, 2:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 30 - Chick-fil-A Bowl at Atlanta, ACC vs. SEC, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 31 - MPC Computers Bowl at Boise, Idaho, WAC vs. ACC, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Jan. 1 - Outback Bowl at Tampa, Fla., Big Ten No. 3 vs. SEC No. 3, 9 a.m. (ESPN)

Jan. 1 - Cotton Bowl at Dallas, SEC vs Big 12, 9:30 a.m. (FOX)

Jan. 1 - Capital One Bowl at Orlando, Fla., Big Ten vs. SEC, 11 a.m. (ABC)

Jan. 1 - Gator Bowl at Jacksonville, Fla., ACC No. 2 vs. Big East No. 2 or Notre Dame, 11 a.m. (CBS)

Jan. 1 - Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif., BCS (Pac-10 champion) vs. BCS (Big Ten champion), 3 p.m. (ABC)

Jan. 1 - Fiesta Bowl at Glendale, Ariz., BCS vs. BCS (Big 12), 6 p.m. (FOX)

Jan. 2 - Orange Bowl at Miami, BCS vs. BCS, 6 p.m. (FOX)

Jan. 3 - Sugar Bowl at Atlanta, BCS vs. BCS, 6 p.m. (FOX)

Jan. 6 - International Bowl at Toronto, Big East vs. MAC, 10 a.m. (ESPN2)

Jan. 7 - GMAC Bowl at Mobile, Ala., CUSA vs. MAC, 6 p.m. (ESPN)

Jan. 8 - BCS National Championship at Glendale, Ariz., BCS1 vs. BCS2, 6 p.m. (FOX)