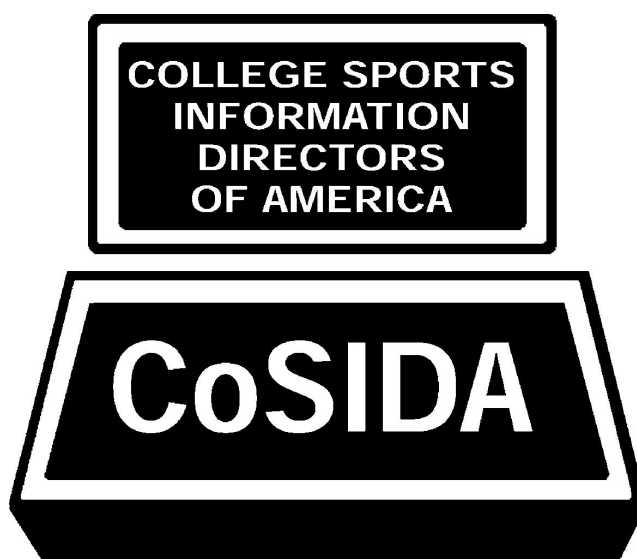


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Scandal left Bensel-Meyers in ruin

By CARTER STRICKLAND, Atlanta Journal-Constitution
July 30, 2006

The people who had stared, pointed and cursed at Linda Bensel-Meyers weren't supposed to be there on this Saturday.

All the fans, she figured, were at Neyland Stadium, where the Tennessee Volunteers were playing to another crowd of more than 100,000. Today, she thought, would be safe. She'd leave home with her three boys and go to a Knoxville mall. Today, maybe life could be normal, like it used to be.

"People spat on us," Bensel-Meyers said.

Life, she now knew, would never be the same.

Seven years ago, Bensel-Meyers, director of the freshman English program at Tennessee, came forward and charged the institution and athletics department with academic fraud. Papers were being plagiarized, she claimed. Athletes were getting grades they didn't earn, the same charge being made now by a professor at Auburn.

Bensel-Meyers is tucked away in relative anonymity now. She is a professor at Denver University, a private school where athletics aren't nearly as big. Her marriage is over. Her children's futures have been drastically altered. Her health is in decline. Her bills are piling up.

"It's tough," she said. "There was a time when my children blamed me for all this. Now they understand. They understand that it was something that had to be done.

"People always wonder if I would change anything. What they don't understand is I didn't have a choice. Not if I wanted to live with myself every day."

Lives changed forever The scandals have long been forgotten by most fans and forgiven by the NCAA at Ohio State, Minnesota, Indiana and Georgia. The crowds still come to cheer on their heroes. The athletics departments continue to generate millions.

But the lives of some of those who blew the whistle on alleged academic corruption haven't been the same since.

"If you blow the whistle, you are retaliated against," said Dylan Blaylock of the Government Accountability Project, an agency that defends whistle-blowers. "What you have to understand is this can be a life-changing event."

Last week, Auburn professor James Gundlach entered the fray, claiming the atmosphere of athletics over academics is pervasive at his school.

"The amazing part to me is that a faculty member stood up on his hind legs and blew the whistle," former Indiana professor Murray Sperber said. "Every faculty member at every big-time sports school in America ... knows analogous stories but will not break the code of silence. It's worse than the Mafia's omerta."

They also know what happens to those who do speak out.

Jan Gangelhoff spoke out. A former tutor for the Minnesota men's basketball team, she came forward with a story of how she'd written 400 papers for players from 1994-98.

Although she had no known history of heart problems, Gangelhoff underwent quadruple-

bypass surgery. Depression, illness and stress followed Gangelhoff until her 2005 death, at age 56.

"The effect of her doing what she did, it might have been fatal," said Jim Lord, Gangelhoff's attorney. "... To defend yourself against a constant barrage of what people were saying about her and doing, it takes an enormous amount of energy for anyone."

"Most people don't realize how much courage it took for my mother to come forward and tell her story to the public," Anthony Gangelhoff, Jan's son, wrote in an e-mail to the AJC. "She was at the center of one of the worst cases of academic fraud in NCAA, as well as U.S. history. She knew that possibly careers would be ended, people would be hurt. She would be labeled a traitor, a liar and so forth."

Support hard to find Sperber didn't expose academic fraud, just an inconsistent policy. The Indiana professor publicly questioned why Hoosiers basketball coach Bob Knight was above the code of conduct other IU employees were forced to adhere to.

Death threats soon followed.

"Some of the people are such geniuses that they left the threats on the answering machine," said Sperber, a longtime critic of the NCAA and Knight. "They felt like they were immune. These people, in a sense, imitate their heroes."

"Bob Knight is a loudmouth, foul-mouth bully, so the people tend to be loudmouth, foul-mouth bullies."

The support that at times can be the cornerstone of an academic community never surfaced publicly. It rarely does.

"Who wants to be the one to saying anything?" said Richard Southall, a professor of sports and leisure at the University of Memphis. "Look what happens. Are there things going on here at Memphis? I don't know. But if there were, I am very reticent about saying anything because I am an untenured professor."

Whistle-blowers, Southall and others know, often stand alone.

"I remember getting an e-mail from a faculty member who saw me on TV," Sperber said. "It said, 'Good for you Murray for speaking out.' And then it said in all caps: 'P.S. Murray, Whatever you do, don't use my name.'"

"What people see is a chilling effect from co-workers," said Blaylock, whose group represented FBI whistle-blower Coleen Rowley. "Although they might agree with what they did, they don't want to be perceived as being in the same boat with them."

Sperber retreated to Canada after he lit the torch on the firestorm of controversy in Knight's last months at Indiana. It was an unpaid leave. He only returned after Knight had been fired. He took early retirement and now lives with his wife in California.

Now, it is Gundlach's life that could be altered by his decision to stand up for academic integrity.

"I hope he is strong," Bensel-Meyers said.

"What Professor Gundlach did, for him to come forward in the SEC, knowing what had happened to Linda Bensel-Meyers and how her life was turned upside down ... it took a lot of courage and conviction," said Mississippi State professor David Ridpath, director of the Drake Group, a band of more than 200 professors seeking to change the climate of athletics over academics.

Auburn E-mails mixed Gundlach said he has received a few hundred E-mails - about half supportive, half negative.

"Some people around the department seem to act like they are trying to figure out if I am contagious," Gundlach said.

For his sake, Bensel-Meyers hopes Auburn fans are more forgiving than Tennessee's.

"My youngest son, I was having to go to his school all the time and pick him up because of things that people were saying to him," she said. "Because of all the stress, my oldest son broke out in a rash that we had trouble treating."

She eventually moved to Denver, her marriage ruined. Her husband refused to leave, she said, so they divorced. Her two oldest sons, who were finishing high school, also stayed in Tennessee.

"I always thought (Knoxville) was my home," she said. "Now that I'm here, I'm not afraid to tell people my name anymore."

Since her move in 2002, Bensel-Meyers has twice undergone operations for digestive tract issues she said are related to the stress caused by her coming forward. Two of her three sons are college-aged but not enrolled anywhere.

"We don't have the money," she said. "The legal bills, the doctor bills. We just don't have it.

"But those are just material things. We will make it. Now I am able to live with myself every day."

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Updated 6:48 AM on Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Big 12 chief stresses safe play, stronger nonconference schedules

Wire Report

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - Big 12 schools should still pursue strong nonconference schedules even though they're no longer a determining factor in the Bowl Championship Series, league commissioner and former BCS coordinator Kevin Weiberg said Tuesday.

"I certainly favored the move to eliminate it from the BCS because it made things complicated," said Weiberg, who wanted more voter control over BCS standings along with the system's controversial computer algorithm.

The Big 12 currently rewards schools with challenging non-conference schedules by giving them an extra unit - about \$200,000 - from the conference's revenue-sharing pot if the game is televised nationally.

Speaking during the league's annual football media days, Weiberg also stressed two game-day issues: moving school bands from behind the benches of opposing teams, and the Big 12's continued efforts to prevent fans from rushing the field after games.

Bands were sitting between the two 25-yard lines, Weiberg said, and were mainly a noise problem for the opposing bench.

"There's really no good reason for bands to be in that location," Weiberg said. The conference is stressing that member schools make their "best efforts" to keep bands away from the benches in 2006 and will require them to comply in 2007.

This year, schools are filming public service announcements starring coaches and players, reminding fans not to rush the field after games, Weiberg said. The conference is now requiring members to monitor fans with video and to increase security around visiting teams' bench areas.

The issue is not one of the conference wanting to ruin fans' celebration, Weiberg said, but of concern for their safety.

He cited a 2003 incident in which a Nebraska player broke the nose of a Missouri fan who ran onto the field after a game in Columbia. The player, Kellen Huston, was fined \$500 for the punch, and the fan, Matthew Scott, was ticketed for trespassing.

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Wojciechowski

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Updated: July 29, 2006, 4:18 PM ET

SEC media event is preseason football's Mardi Gras



By Gene Wojciechowski

ESPN.com

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HOOVER, Ala. -- Your calendar says the 2006 college football season starts Aug. 31. Mine says it officially began here Wednesday at 12:47 p.m., when grown women clutching footballs and Sharpies climbed over tables, chairs -- even sports-talk radio personnel -- in a crazed attempt to nearly gang tackle Alabama coach Mike Shula as he tried to make his way to the second floor of the Wynfrey Hotel.

Gawd, I love the living, breathing freak show that is the SEC Football Media Days.

You don't attend the SEC's 52-hour football overdose as much as you try to survive it. No place in the world has more Urkels per square foot than the lobby of the Wynfrey during the league's annual kickoff sessions. The place is more crowded than a Wal-Mart the day after Thanksgiving.

Poor Shula, a pleasant man whose body language in public settings screams, "I will give you my courtesy car and half of my annuity package if you come no closer," had to duck down a hallway and into a private elevator so he could escape the chair-hurdling females, whose Southern accents were as thick as pom-poms. Only Bama women can stretch the word, "Coach," into nine syrupy syllables.

One of the women got his autograph, thanks to a bull rush around the corner and then over a radio guy sitting at a table. Too bad Bama doesn't need help on the D-line. Also in the crowd was a guy holding a stack of houndstooth hats (can't they let the Bear rest in peace?), a codger wearing shin-high Crimson socks and shorts (pause for fashion scream), and assorted people wearing T-shirts that generally made fun of Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer.



AP Photo/Butch Dill

**Mike Shula eventually made it
past the autograph seekers to**

Shula, his nervous grin in place, did another radio interview and then disappeared. By taking the elevator upstairs to the main interview room on the second floor, Shula missed the media greeting party waiting for him at the nearby escalator: 18 TV cameramen, three photographers and a few goobers like myself who wanted to see if the fourth-year Bama coach would be overwhelmed by the attention and ask for his blanky and a glass of warm buttermilk.

reach the podium.

I'll admit it: I usually build my summer around the SEC Media Days. It's the preseason football equivalent of Mardi Gras. It's Tommy Lee kooky. It's off-the-charts excessive. And you know what? I dig it. It turns me on. Yeah, it turns me on. Because you know what the kicker is? Maybe I'm a little crazy. That's right, maybe Geno is a little nuts.

Of course, I'm not alone. There are more than 600 credentialed media members here, which is more credentials than the league issues for its championship game. If you add the credentials given to the conference's corporate and bowl partners, the number reaches 740. Now you know why Shula stammered his way through his SEC Media Days debut in 2003. Or why conference commissioner Mike Slive, also a rookie in 2002, took one look at the massive media crowd and almost required medical assistance.

"I walked in here and I'll tell you, I could hardly breathe," says Slive, who came to the SEC from Conference USA. "I have very little recollection."

Slive opens a manilla folder to reveal his itinerary for the afternoon: State of the SEC address, followed by nine separate interview sessions. And this is the easy day. Thursday he does Radio Row.

Radio Row, where Shula waded into, is a corridor just off the hotel lobby that this year features 21 different live sports talk broadcasts. I just came from the ACC's media days. A grand total of two radio stations were there. You could hear crickets chirp. Or Virginia's Al Groh.

Every major conference has football media days. And it usually works like this: Each coach launches into a painful monologue detailing his three-deep depth chart, and then answers such detailed questions as, "When your tight end blocks down on the strongside backer, who seals the cornerback when he forces on run support?"



AP Photo/Butch Dill

Georgia's Nick Jones deals with some of the more than 600 credentialed media members.

In the business, we call those, "Ivan Maisel-ers."

The SEC has its share of X-and-O questions, as well as the dreaded, "Can you talk about [insert topic, because I'm incapable of actually framing a question of my own]?" But only the SEC hires a team of *three* professional stenotypists to provide transcripts of every session. The Big Ten Conference manages with two.

Only the SEC Media Days has featured Nick Saban's massive dog darting around the Wynfrey's second floor after the pooch somehow escaped from the then-LSU coach's hotel room.

Only the SEC Media Days has had Steve Spurrier criticize the BCS -- with then-SEC

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commissioner and BCS godfather Roy Kramer standing at the back of the room with a pasted grin on his face. Spurrier would see Kramer, acknowledge the commish, and then continue his critique of the non-playoff system.

This is the place where reporters and SEC players once gathered for a Miss Hawaiian Tropic regional beauty contest the night before the Media Days started. One writer tossed his room key at the high-heeled feet of one knockout (fat chance). Meanwhile, Memphis Commercial Appeal writer Ron Higgins listened in amazement as an SEC star player dismissed one of the tanned stunners because, as the All-American told his wingman, she had "bad teeth." The wingman's reply: "You looking at her *teeth*?"

The Big 12 Conference Media Days has Burnt Orange and Mack Brown. The SEC has Big Orange and Fulmer, who two years ago refused to attend the sessions in suburban Birmingham because he didn't want to get served with a subpoena. So Fulmer did his interviews via teleconference squawk box from the safety of Knoxville. Slive fined Tennessee.

This is the event where some players (two from each of the SEC's 12 teams are invited) actually design and coordinate their own outfits, as if it were the NFL draft. This is where a radio reporter once asked then-Auburn coach Pat Dye a question, but did it in a drop-dead impersonation of then-Tennessee coach Johnny Majors. Dye freaked. This is where a taxi driver once pulled a gun on a visiting SEC writer.

Only here can Spurrier play in the Media Days golf tournament -- and chide an Alabama writer for something he wrote a season earlier. Only here can you drive down to Tuscaloosa for the original Dreamland Barbecue. Only here is football a way of life.

"It's 24-7-365," Slive says.

And Slive's staff already has prepared the interview schedule for 2007. Is it too early to request a credential?

Gene Wojciechowski is the senior national columnist for ESPN.com. You can contact him at gene.wojciechowski@espn3.com.



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NCAA chief ponders donors' limits

By DAVID JONES
Florida Today

July 29, 2006

INDIANAPOLIS -- How far is too far?

Billionaires' egos have forced colleges nationwide to search deep within their economic souls to meet the wishes of some of their wealthiest alumni, who insist they have only the best intentions at heart.

NCAA president Myles Brand is concerned about the huge amounts of money that schools now are accepting from wealthy donors for elaborate projects. Often, the rest of the money to complete those projects is being raised by bonds in the "arms war" of trying to build bigger and better facilities.

During an interview at the NCAA men's basketball Final Four in April, Myles said if a program suddenly starts to lose more games, "who will pay the bonds is the rest of the institution, mainly the academic side."

For example, in the chase for the dollar, Oklahoma State hit a home run that would have made Babe Ruth gasp. Billionaire alumnus Boone Pickens agreed in January to donate \$165 million to the Oklahoma State athletic department, the largest single gift ever awarded to an NCAA athletic program.

Pickens' money is supposed to go toward building an "athletic village" on campus that is projected to cost more than \$700 million.

Oklahoma State president David Schmidly said the donation will impact the entire school, making it easier to attract students and faculty - not just win more games.

Pickens has a net worth of more than \$1 billion, having made most of his money in oil, and he is a 1951 graduate of Oklahoma State. He said he wanted the Cowboys to become more competitive in the Big 12.

His millions of dollars will help. But the school could be forced to absorb huge debt to finish financing the project by selling bonds.

More and more nationwide, major-college sports powers are implementing that strategy. A wealthy booster donates millions for a project, but the school has to raise a large portion as well.

"I guess the question is, how much should one person be allowed to donate? Do they need to set limits?" said Florida Tech president Anthony Catanese, who helped start the football program at Florida Atlantic University and has served as a dean at three other traditional football schools: Florida, Miami and Georgia Tech.

NCAA officials also are concerned what kind of impact a booster such as Pickens could have on the decisions an athletic department makes. If a huge donor became angry and wanted a new football coach, for example, could that booster devastate the program's future plans by ending the flow of cash and lashing out publicly?

"By taking on this facility-bonded indebtedness, you do increase the risk to the rest of the university," Brand said.

Oklahoma State's board of regents recently announced that the school's in-state tuition will be increased a little more than 5 percent this year for needs unrelated to sports.

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Article published Jul 27, 2006
Jul 26, 2006

Welcome to the SEC's MTV moment

By PAT DOOLEY

Sun sports writer

HOOVER, Ala. - Mike Slive had been hired but still wasn't officially on the job as the new commissioner of the SEC when he showed up for his first SEC Media Days in 2002.

"I walked into the room and I had a hard time breathing," he said.

It is an overwhelming experience for many who step into the bright lights at the Wynfrey Hotel each year, a circus of writers, broadcasters and Internet providers that has grown into a monstrous MTV-like event.

This year, there are 740 credentialed members of the media. By comparison, the ACC Media Days outing in Jacksonville last week drew 175 media members.

It was 1985 when the SEC decided to bring coaches, players and media to one location rather than have the Skywriters Tour - 30-something scribes and microphone-wielding TV broadcasters piling into a plane jumping from one SEC city to another.

Then, sports talk radio was in its infancy. It wasn't until 1992 that one radio talk show decided to set up shop in the Sheraton Hotel lobby in downtown Birmingham. Today, there are 21 tables on Radio Row, each with a colorful banner and plenty to talk about.

Charles Bloom, the associate commissioner for the league who is in charge of putting on the outing, said it has grown from an opportunity for the media into a happening.

"Instead of it being something to promote the upcoming season, it has become an event that stands on its own," he said. "That's how much it has grown. There's nothing really like it."

Other conferences have used the SEC as a model, but none of them can compare in sheer numbers. Part of that is by design.

"We've made a concerted effort to make this a celebration of SEC football and an unofficial kickoff to the season," Bloom said. "So we credential some people who can't get credentials to games. We could set a policy to cut it in half. But we want to give everybody an opportunity to talk to the coaches and student-athletes."



University of Alabama head football coach Mike Shula balances answering questions for the media on Radio Row and signing autographs for fans during SEC Football Media Days at the Wynfrey Hotel in Hoover, Ala., on Wednesday. (MICHELLE WILLIAMS/Tuscaloosa News)

That's not always a good thing. Unlike the ACC Media Days, the SEC has security to try to make sure that fans don't interfere with those trying to work. But you still see a guy wearing a "Yea, Alabama" shirt talking to a guy wearing a "South Carolina Football" shirt mingling with the writers.

"It's a lot different than it used to be," said Birmingham radio personality Paul Finebaum. "When it first started, there were mostly legitimate journalists. Now you have guys taking pictures on their cell phones and getting autographs. And when the Alabama coaches are here, it's a circus."

An example of just how imposing it can be for the players? Former Georgia quarterback David Greene, now with Seattle, was part of the media onslaught at last year's Super Bowl. In a journal he kept for a Georgia newspaper, Greene wrote: "It was big but it wasn't as big as I thought it would be because I've been to SEC Media Days and that's huge anyway. I thought the SEC Media Days had more people, which is kind of odd."

The event was moved from the Sheraton to the Wynfrey in Hoover, a Birmingham suburb, in 2002 to better accommodate the burgeoning numbers. The year before that, the media count was 481.

This year's event includes seven different breakout rooms set up for television, a radio room and a ballroom used for almost 300 print journalists.

"We try to do something new every year or every other year," Bloom said. "We started boxing the media guides rather than having media pick them up one-by-one and last year brought in ASAP (a crew that types up coaches' interviews and prints them out for the media.)

"It's really unique."

Contact Pat Dooley at 374-5053 or [dooleyp@ gvillesun.com](mailto:dooleyp@gvillesun.com).

Check this out:

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Article published Jul 29, 2006

SEC Media Days: The circus has left town

By BRYAN MULLEN
The Tennessean

HOOVER, Ala. - The tents came down and the circus left town.

Another SEC Football Media Days is in the books.

It will be back next July. Bigger than ever. Because that's how this extravaganza works.

"It's probably grown 30 or 40 percent since I started with the SEC in 1995," said Charles Bloom, SEC Associate Commissioner/Media Relations. "For us, we've had some internal discussions on not only growing the event but making it better for everybody."

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Bigger? Is that even possible?

League officials pre-registered 740 media credentials for the three-day frenzy. By comparison, the ACC had 175 media members attend its similar football event last week.

But it's unfair to compare the SEC event with any other college football conference. Let's take it up a notch.

Former Georgia quarterback David Greene, who now plays for the Seattle Seahawks, wrote a diary for a Georgia newspaper during this past Super Bowl.

"It was big, but it wasn't as big as I thought it would be," Greene wrote about the legendary Super Bowl Media Day. "I've been to SEC Media Days and that's huge anyway. I thought the SEC Media Days had more people, which is kind of odd."

And creepy.

Most SEC fans don't exactly know what goes on at Media Days or what the atmosphere is like. Here's a thumbnail sketch:

It's held at The Wynfrey Hotel, a massive and classy hotel affixed to the Riverchase Galleria (think Cool Springs Galleria on steroids). Fans are allowed only in the mall and in the granite-floored hotel lobby.

Up the escalator is where the real Media Days action goes down. There are multiple rooms where a team's head coach and two players are shuttled around. Some rooms are for TV, others are for radio and Internet, and the biggest is a massive ballroom for print reporters. Four teams are represented each of the three days. It's boom-boom-boom. Players and coaches don't stay in any one room very long, so having hundreds of media members trying to get their questions answered is a challenge.

It wasn't always this way. SEC Football Media Days began in 1985, but before that it was the media who went to the teams during the preseason. Beginning in the 1960s a group of about 40 sportswriters would travel by plane (a Martin 404 prop plane, actually) to visit all of the SEC schools and talk with players and coaches. The group was called the Skywriters.

"I never thought it would get to this point," said Clyde Bolton, 69, a former Skywriter member who worked for the Birmingham News from 1961-2000.

"I stopped going (with the Skywriters) when it got to be 45 or 50 people going on the trip because I thought it got too

big," said George Lapedes, a longtime sports writer and radio host from Memphis.

The evolution and growth of Media Days isn't lost on SEC officials or the league's coaches, either. SEC Commissioner Michael Slive recounted a story this week about him walking into his first SEC Media Days in 2002 and seeing how many media members were in attendance. He said it took his breath away.

"It's absolutely different than when I first started," said Tennessee's Phillip Fulmer, who is entering his 15th season as the Vols coach. "With the intensity with the Internet sites and sports talk radio, it's grown a lot."

It's a necessary evil for coaches and players who are less than comfortable in any media situation. But even for those who are media friendly, like Vanderbilt coach Bobby Johnson, Media Days can leave a weird feeling in the pit of their stomachs.

When Johnson attended his first Media Days in 2002, he expected the worse.

"Everybody was telling me that people were going to have rifles and machetes and they were going to shoot at you," Johnson said. "All they can do is ask you questions, and you have to answer them the best that you can. You get through it. It's a chance to get your program out there, so I'm more than willing to get out there and talk to them."

All 740 of them.

And many more next year.

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Hooker: Early signing period wouldn't be perfect

By DAVE HOOKER, hookerd@knews.com

July 29, 2006



College football fans have trouble sympathizing with coaches that lead their respective teams.

After all, they make millions of dollars and are loved by countless fans.

Well, not all of them.

Head coaches often find themselves in sweet situations. Assistant coaches, however, make far less money yet handle the minutia that makes college football possible.

Take for instance recruiting. An assistant coach has to find the best player in his area and present the player to his fellow coaches. While that has long been a constant in college football, the dynamics are evolving.

"I think recruiting has changed dramatically in the last 10 years," Kentucky coach Rich Brooks said during SEC media days in Hoover, Ala. "I don't think there's any doubt that players make decisions earlier.

"You need to do a lot of homework before you offer someone because you have a greater chance of making a mistake in recruiting."

An assistant coach now has to promote (or neglect) a player much earlier than before. Offers to junior prospects are flying soon after signing day in February. That means coaches must judge talent based almost solely on a junior year.

That means no summer camps and no senior-season evaluations.

"I think it's an issue we should discuss," SEC commissioner Mike Slive said of the ever-changing face of college football recruiting.

Slive has more input than an average commissioner. He is the chairman of the National Letter of Intent Steering Committee, which oversees the signing process.

The National Letter of Intent is the document that athletes sign binding them to their school.

So, with recruiting moving further up the calendar, how can the NCAA alleviate pressures on college coaches?

One possibility is an early signing period for college football, much like the NCAA utilizes for college basketball. Basketball prospects can sign a National Letter of Intent in one of two signing periods, held during March and November.

Why not have the same in football?

"There are pros and cons on this issue," Slive said. "We see that in basketball. Yes, it relieves some of the recruiting pressures but it creates other pressures, particularly when there are coaching changes."

Fair enough.

Pretend for a second that you are a prospect that signed with a school in July, the NCAA's newly designated summer signing period. Then, your coach is fired. Suddenly, you're stuck with a coach that doesn't know you from Adam.

Potential problems persist.

That brings us to December when most coaching changes would have been decided, if not suspected, at least.

"I'm very much in favor of an early signing period, even if it's early December for players that have already committed," Brooks said. "They still have to go through the headache of the calls and even though they've committed ... some schools won't accept it so they get worn out.

"If a player makes up his mind he ought to be able to sign."

A December signing period has obvious advantages for a school like Kentucky as it battles national recruiting powers that are far better funded.

The same would seem to hold true for Ole Miss and its limited budget. However, Ole Miss coach Ed Orgeron doesn't quite see it like that.

"I am totally against an early signing period," Orgeron said. "It requires a lot of manpower. There's a lot of things going on in December such as preparing for bowls and preparing for championships."

Orgeron may be unique. I'll take that back. He's definitely unique.

His bombastic, convincing style may be best on display during December and January, when coaches make all-important in-home visits with their most significant targets.

"An early signing date would mess the schedule of college football up," Orgeron said. "I like a lot of things that go on in December through February. You get to visit parents. You get to solidify relationships.

"I don't want that eliminated. I'm totally against an early signing period."

Orgeron isn't just concerned about his schedule book. He also trusts his eye for talent.

"If you're a great evaluator of talent, it's an advantage for you," he said. "If you're not a great evaluator of talent, you have to wait a bit longer."

There's little question that college recruiters have a tougher job than they had just a decade ago. And there's absolutely no question that they have to deal with it.

"You have to stay up," Arkansas coach Houston Nutt said. "You have to do your homework."

Visiting: Running back Lennon Creer (6-foot-1, 202 pounds) and wide receiver Darnius Moore (6-1, 175 pounds) from Tatum (Texas) High School visited Tennessee on Thursday and Friday.

Wide receiver Ahmad Paige (6-3, 175 pounds) from Sterlington (La.) High and defensive end Luther Davis (6-4, 260 pounds) from West Monroe (La.) High told the News Sentinel that they will visit Knoxville later this week. The two are best friends and will likely pick the same college.



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Posted by DAVE HOOKER, hookerd@knews.com on July 29, 2006



Clinical trials can offer qualified participants medical options



<http://www.latimes.com/sports/la-sp-pacnotes28jul28,1,3246928.story?coll=la-headlines-sports>
From the Los Angeles Times

PACIFIC 10 NOTEBOOK

Coaches Upset Over Rule to Speed Up Game

By David Wharton
Times Staff Writer

July 28, 2006

NCAA Rule 3-2-5-e, just one sentence long, ignited a litany of complaints Thursday from coaches attending Pacific 10 Conference football media day at the Sheraton Gateway hotel near LAX.

The new rule states that after changes of possession such as interceptions and kickoffs, the game clock begins as soon as officials mark the ball ready for play. In the past, the clock did not start until the ensuing snap, giving offensive and defensive squads more time to run onto the field.

This seemingly minor wrinkle was enacted to shorten games by a few minutes. Coaches foresee massive headaches.

"It's the most dramatic, drastic change I've ever seen," Oregon Coach **Mike Bellotti** said. "Nobody likes it."

In simple terms, those lost few minutes might have cut short UCLA's comeback victories against Stanford and California last season.

"Yeah," UCLA Coach **Karl Dorrell** said. "We're not for it."

At a morning rules meeting, coaches considered several doomsday scenarios.

If a team is trailing and takes possession in the final seconds, mayhem could ensue as players sprint onto the field while officials mark the ball and scramble out of the way.

If only one or two seconds remain, coaches asked, will offensive squads have time to line up and snap the ball for a Hail Mary or field-goal attempt?

On a lesser note, if the leading team takes possession with less than 25 seconds remaining — the time allotted to snap the ball before a delay-of-game penalty — it could simply wait on the sideline as officials mark the ball and start the clock.

The game could tick down with an empty field.

"I wouldn't send my offense out there," Oregon State Coach **Mike Riley** said. "No sense in taking a chance."

Asked about this potential scene, Pac-10 Commissioner **Tom Hansen** said: "Not aesthetically pleasing."

But Hansen does wonder if coaches are overreacting a bit. In more than two decades as commissioner, he has seen them bemoan other changes that proved insignificant.

Yet his reservations about Rule 3-2-5-e prompted him to send a letter asking the NCAA to reconsider. He was told to reapply next season.

Verle Sorgen, the Pac-10 coordinator for football officiating, shrugged and said: "We'll do the best we can."

USC was picked to win the conference in the annual media poll. The Trojans received 18 first-place votes, California seven, Oregon three and Arizona State one. UCLA was picked to finish fifth. "Been there before," Bruins Coach **Karl Dorrell** said. UCLA also was picked fifth last year before finishing third and ending the season 10-2 after a victory in the Sun Bowl. Times writers do not participate in voting....

Coach **Pete Carroll** said freshman receiver **Jamere Holland** sprained his shoulder during a seven-on-seven workout and would not be able to participate when the Trojans open fall practice on Aug. 3. Carroll said running back **Kenny Ashley** did not qualify academically....

Carroll reiterated that he thought All-American receiver **Dwayne Jarrett** would not miss any games if his eligibility is reinstated, as expected, by the NCAA. But Carroll said Jarrett would probably have to pay back some money to **Bob Leinart**, the father of former quarterback **Matt Leinart**. Jarrett was declared ineligible last month after the NCAA determined he received an "extra benefit," by paying less than half the rent for a \$3,866-a-month apartment he shared with Matt Leinart last season. Bob Leinart has said that his son and Jarrett each paid \$650 a month, and that he picked up the difference.

UCLA opens practice Aug. 7 and will use an intramural field for the first two weeks while renovations are completed at Spaulding Field, which is getting a section of synthetic grass and a new drainage system.... The Bruins will wear new-look road uniforms. The old navy blue numbers have been replaced by a lighter shade of blue and will be outlined in gold and navy blue. The shoulder stripes will also be the lighter shade.

*

Times staff writers Gary Klein and Lonnie White contributed to this report.

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ACC tweaks bowl selection process

The ACC creates more concrete criteria for its bowl tie-ins to select conference teams and announces a partnership with the Orange Bowl.

BY NORM WOOD

247-4642

July 26 2006

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLA. -- Atlantic Coast Conference commissioner John Swofford announced Tuesday the conference has formed a partnership with the Orange Bowl and has tweaked the selection process for its bowl game tie-ins to prevent what happened to Boston College last season from happening again.

The ACC, which has eight bowl game tie-ins, will send its conference champion to the Orange Bowl, one of the four Bowl Championship Series destinations. There also will be more concrete parameters for placing ACC teams in bowl games than the conference had in the past.

"To have a relationship with the Orange Bowl, I think we'll be in great shape as a conference regardless of what's happening in front of us," Swofford said on the last day of ACC football media days at the Sawgrass Marriott Resort & Spa.

Swofford added that the ACC is likely to pick up an option at the end of the season to keep the conference's championship game in Jacksonville, Fla., through 2008. Florida State defeated Virginia Tech 27-22 in December in the ACC's first championship game. This season's championship will be played Dec. 2 in Jacksonville's Alltel Stadium.

Under the new bowl setup, the Peach Bowl will select an ACC team after the Orange Bowl takes the conference's championship game winner. The only way the conference champion wouldn't end up in the Orange Bowl is if the champion was No. 1 or No. 2 in the BCS rankings. In that case, the ACC champion would go to the BCS national-championship game, regardless of the location.

The Gator Bowl will have the third choice of ACC teams. The Champs Sports Bowl in Orlando, Fla., will choose fourth. The Music City Bowl in Nashville, Tenn., Meineke Car Care Bowl in Charlotte, N.C., and Emerald Bowl in San Francisco will select fifth, sixth and seventh, respectively. Each of those bowls will submit to the ACC a list of most desired conference teams for the next four years in an effort to make the selection process smoother. The MPC Computers Bowl will select the eighth team.

The ACC championship-game loser can't go to any bowl below the Music City Bowl. Also, if a bowl wanted to bypass a team for another team with a worse record, the team with the worse record would have to be within one win of the better team.

Last season, BC was sent to the MPC Computers Bowl in Boise, Idaho, with an 8-3 overall record and 5-3 conference mark. It was a frustrating finale for BC, which watched Virginia and N.C. State go to bowls in

medical careers institute.

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warmer climates and closer to home though both teams finished just 6-5 overall and 3-5 in the conference. U.Va. was selected to play in the Music City Bowl and N.C. State went to the Meineke Car Care Bowl.

"I don't think (ACC officials) answer to me on the bowl situation one way or another," BC coach Tom O'Brien said. "I think we proved that we belong in this conference. We went from a northeast school in a northeast league (the Big East) to a national school in a national league. Other people are going to have to explain if they think we belong or not." «

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July 30, 2006

DIGITAL DOMAIN

All the Internet's a Stage. Why Don't C.E.O.'s Use It?

By RANDALL STROSS

CHIEF executives are inclined to avoid activities generally deemed to be high-risk: Sky diving. Cliff jumping. Motorcycle racing. And blogging.

Two years ago, when Jonathan I. Schwartz, then the president and chief operating officer at [Sun Microsystems](#), inaugurated a blog that made him the most senior executive at his company to venture onto such a publicly visible platform, he embraced the risks. "Hey, life is short," he wrote on the first day, as if he were about to leap from a plane. The title of that first post was "Head First." Mr. Schwartz not only survived the plunge, he turned out to be a natural. In a voice that is refreshing in its unprocessed directness, he discusses big-picture trends in the computer industry, promotes Sun's wares and tweaks competitors, and reports on the odd epiphany experienced while on the road or engaged in intellectual combat with industry friends and adversaries. The regularity of his posts, which blend serious content and an informal writing style, and their wide-ranging scope make this blog the apotheosis of expository writing: thought made visible.

When Mr. Schwartz was promoted to the top job at Sun this spring, he automatically became a member of an elite group: Fortune 500 C.E.O. bloggers. He is the only active member.

Where is everyone else?

Capital markets function as they should when the flow of information is strong and unimpeded. Mr. Schwartz has shown ably that for the chief executive sincerely interested in increasing information flow to the fullest range of stakeholders, a blog is a hydraulic wonder.

Many companies, eager to claim that their dearest wish is to draw ever closer to outside constituencies, boast that they encourage blogging among employees. [Microsoft](#), for example, says that it has more than 3,000 employees who maintain blogs on the company's Web site, an impressive number. But a large company is an outsize elephant, and each employee works within a tiny wrinkle on the hide. Only the chief executive is in a position to sit astride the beast and share the widest perspective. The fact that Microsoft's chief executive, [Steven A. Ballmer](#), and its chairman and former chief executive, [Bill Gates](#), have chosen not to blog leaves an embarrassing silence at the top that the combined clacking of those underlings cannot fill.

It is not just Mr. Ballmer who is conspicuously absent. Other chief executives in the computer industry, the place most at ease with the technology, are also missing. Those who would like to read a blog maintained by [Steven P. Jobs](#) at [Apple Computer](#) must settle for a parody, "The Secret Life of Steve Jobs," started in June by an anonymous wag. (In almost every

post, the fictional Mr. Jobs recounts an unpleasant encounter with someone else, from state troopers to [Steven Spielberg](#), which includes his exasperated refrain: "I invented the friggin' [iPod](#), O.K.? Have you heard of it?")

Outside the technology field, only one other Fortune 500 company has had a C.E.O. who has called himself a blogger, John P. Mackey of [Whole Foods Market](#). Mr. Mackey has made a total of six posts over the course of 10 months, and these consist of reprints of speeches and interviews and similar materials created originally for a different purpose. Using blogging software to park a reprint once every two months does not a blog make.

In contrast, Mr. Schwartz has posted his thoughts, very much on the fly, five times a month for two years. Over time he has earned credibility by his willingness to put in public view his unfiltered ruminations on a regular basis.

That credibility was needed last week, when he sought to put a positive spin on Sun's quarterly earnings, his first as chief executive. One-time charges combined to produce another loss for the quarter — the company has reported losses for the past five fiscal years — but revenue was up significantly.

After the earnings release, Mr. Schwartz itemized on his blog the many positive developments that he sees in the company's business. Viewed alone, it would be easy for unhappy investors to dismiss. But read as the latest installment of candid self-evaluations of the company's strategic initiatives and performance, Mr. Schwartz's optimism exerts a tonic effect.

C.E.O. blogging should no longer be viewed as extreme sport. Mr. Schwartz's example shows that blogging fits quite naturally into the chief executive's work week. In an exhortatory piece, "If You Want to Lead, Blog," published in *The Harvard Business Review* last year, Mr. Schwartz predicted that "having a blog is not going to be a matter of choice, any more than having e-mail is today."

"My No. 1 job is to be a communicator," Mr. Schwartz told me last week. "I don't understand how a C.E.O. would not blog if committed to open communication."

Assuming that other chief executives are willing to make their thoughts just as visible as Mr. Schwartz's, the blog provides a highly efficient medium of publication. Mr. Schwartz, for instance, simultaneously reaches shareholders, software developers and current and prospective customers. With posted responses, these groups easily reach him as well as one another.

Debbie Weil, author of "The Corporate Blogging Book," which Portfolio Hardcover is to publish this week, tries to persuade reluctant executives with the argument that blogging would save the time they now spend on hundreds of daily e-mail exchanges. "Why not do it more efficiently?" she asks in her book. "Instead of a one-to-one message, why not a communication from one to many thousands?"

American executives are accustomed to relying on professionals to write speeches and books in their name. The temptation to do the same with a blog may seem irresistible, but it would only end badly. Mr. Schwartz warned fellow executives who were considering hiring a ghost writer for their blogs not to bother. "It's like hiring someone to write your

e-mail," he said. Mr. Schwartz does not brag about his own style, but it is difficult to imagine a surrogate who would know how to cover a mix of topics that encompass, to pick a few at random, Java's strategic similarity to electrical light bulbs, a "Harry Potter" movie and network loads, chip multithreading, cold calls and the California Department of Transportation's Windows-centric Web site.

Swipes at competitors like [I.B.M.](#), [Hewlett-Packard](#), Microsoft, Dell and Red Hat provide an entertaining display of pugilistic skill, with all blows above the belt. And when industry alignments shift, as they always do, and yesterday's foe becomes today's partner, Mr. Schwartz has said nothing that could create an embarrassment.

When he is composing his postings, Mr. Schwartz said that he had to keep in mind nontechnical as well as technical readers, from "my mom and dad to a kernel geek working at a competitor." He also has to affix legal boilerplate if he happens to make forward-looking statements about the company, but he does not have Michael A. Dillon, Sun Microsystems' general counsel, review every post before it goes out.

Mr. Dillon said his office gave a one-time briefing about the relevant securities laws to all Sun employees — about 3,000 of them are blogging — and then trusted them to stay out of trouble. It's not the blogs that worry Mr. Dillon but the employee e-mail messages sent without the thought or consideration that goes into a blog post.

WHEN an employee of a publicly traded company publishes regularly on a business blog, something valuable for outside observers is created: a firsthand chronicle. This deserves to be called something special, a primary blog — that is, a primary source, created by a participant or eyewitness — that distinguishes it from all the other blogs (and, yes, from all other newspaper columns, too) that are written at a remove by commentators. Primary blogs maintained by Fortune 500 C.E.O.'s would provide the most vital information to investors.

Ms. Weil, the author, spoke with me last week about the reluctance of Fortune 500 executives to share their thoughts on a public blog, and could find no acceptable excuse for their silence.

"They should come down from the mountain and communicate in their own words — without handlers," Ms. Weil said. "For what they're paid, is that too much to ask?"

Randall Stross is an author based in Silicon Valley and a professor of business at San Jose State University. E-mail: ddomain@nytimes.com.

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Pac-10 and FSN Extend Television and New Media Rights for Football and Other Sports

Contract extends exclusive rights to 18 Pac-10 football games per season.

July 27, 2006

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Los Angeles - The Pac-10 Conference and FSN have reached a multi-year agreement that extends the sports network's exclusive rights to 18 Pac-10 football games per season, plus 35 Olympic sports events. The announcement was made today by Pac-10 Conference Commissioner Tom Hansen and Bob Thompson, President, Fox Sports Networks. In May, FSN also reached a multi-year renewal to remain the conference's exclusive national basketball television partner. Financial terms were not released.

The extension provides FSN national cable and new media rights for football and 35 other events. As for new media, FSN has rights to distribute games live and delayed during an exclusive 30-day window, including exclusive game replays via video-on-demand, wireless, and/or Internet platforms. In addition to exclusive rights to selected games, FSN has certain exclusive telecast windows for its live Pac-10 football coverage.

In addition to the rights provided to FSN and its related new media platforms, the deal gives Fox College Sports (FCS) the right to carry all games and events FSN televises, as well as access to the Pac-10's extensive library of archived football and Olympic sports events.



California's Marshawn Lynch

"We're extremely pleased that Pac-10 Conference football will remain a fixture on FSN well into the next decade," said Thompson. "The conference is important to us and continues to play a vital role in both our national and regional programming, creating a solid core of quality product for FSN, FCS, and all of our affiliated regional sports networks, especially FSN Arizona, FSN Bay Area, FSN Northwest, FSN Prime Ticket and FSN West in Los Angeles.

Added Hansen: "Because FSN has been such a cooperative and supportive partner of our football and basketball television programs, we are especially pleased that we have extended our football rights over a term to match the extension in basketball. FSN understands and values the Pac-10 and its excellent programs in a broad range of sports, and it will provide the conference important exposure in many of them. Extending both the football and basketball relationships with FSN is important and significant because of cross-promotional opportunities which will benefit both properties, FSN, and the conference."

In addition to football and the Olympic sports events, FSN through its recently renewed Pac-10 basketball agreement has exclusive rights to 56 regular-season men's basketball games (40 on cable; 16 broadcast) to be distributed via one or more national over-the-air networks and on FSN, with national or regional coverage. The package also includes exclusive national cable rights to four regular-season women's games annually and the weekly magazine show *Runnin' with the Pac*. FSN also has exclusive rights to the men's and women's conference tournaments.

FSN's Pac-10 basketball rights agreement includes control and direction of Pac-10 Properties. The FSN-owned unit has the exclusive right to sell all Pac-10 sponsorship packages with respect to the men's and women's basketball tournaments, 11 Pac-10 championship events, and year-round overall conference sponsorships. Pac-10 Properties also seeks corporate sponsorships for sports-related events such as the Pride of the Pac Luncheon and the Conference's Hall of Honor Banquet.

About FSN -- FSN, its affiliates, and other FNG-owned networks reach more than 81 million homes through 21

<http://www.cstv.com/printable/schools/pac10/sports/m-footbl/spec-rel/072706aaa.html?frame=bot...> 7/30/2006

regional networks. Based in Los Angeles, FSN owned- or affiliated regional sports networks serve as the TV home to 64 of the 82 MLB, NHL, and NBA teams based in the United States. FSN produces over 4,500 live events each year, including close to 500 in High Definition. In addition to its thousands of home team games and a wide variety of locally produced sports programs, FSN televises national sports events and programs, including Pac-10 and ACC basketball; Pac-10 and Big 12 football; Best Damn Sports Show Period; CMI: Chris Myers Interviews; the Mansionpoker.net Poker Dome Challenge; In Focus; and FSN Final Score. For the latest, up-to-the-minute sports news and opinions, visit the FOX Sports/FSN website at www.FOXSports.com.

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Big East aims to bowl over critics again

By KEVIN McNAMARA
The Providence Journal
19-JUL-06

NEWPORT, R.I. -- A year ago, no one in the Big East knew just what South Florida's football program was all about. The same goes for Cincinnati and Louisville.

For that matter, no one knew just how much life was left in a football league without standard-bearers Miami and Virginia Tech and traditional bowl participant Boston College. That trio was gone for good to the Atlantic Coast Conference.

In their place was an eight-team grouping that lacked geographical boundaries or power teams. At least that was the perception. By the end of the 2005 season, the spin on the Big East was very different, thanks to one stunning performance in the Sugar Bowl.

West Virginia, the Big East champion, shockingly built a 28-0 lead and held on for a 38-35 victory over Georgia in Atlanta. Beating the champs of a football-crazed league like the Southeastern Conference sent shock waves throughout college football and was a win Big East boosters were still crowing about during yesterday's Media Day festivities at the Viking Hotel.

"What West Virginia did last year was a big shot in the arm for the conference," said Connecticut coach Randy Edsall. "That squelched a lot of the heat we'd been hearing. That win took care of a lot of uncertainties surrounding the league."

As the Big East enters Year Two in its most recent football configuration, the eight schools all feel much better than they did a year ago. Not only do they think they have strong enough teams to compete nationally, but the conference also owns lucrative TV contracts with ABC and ESPN that extend into the next decade and is locked into the all-important Bowl Championship Series and its eight-figure bowl payouts.

With West Virginia pegged as a preseason top-five team and a national title contender, the Big East has its marquee team. Louisville is an established top-20 program, and Rutgers and South Florida are in position to build on last season's bowl appearances. If Pittsburgh and Syracuse can rebound from down stretches and Connecticut continues its rise as a Division 1-A program, Big East football could be in a position to annually shock the nation's powers come bowl season.

"We didn't have a lot to lean on when we said last year that we were better than people thought," said West Virginia coach Rich Rodriguez. "Winning a bowl game against the SEC champs really helps everyone out, I think. The thing about our league is it will keep getting better."

Big East commissioner Mike Tranchese harkened to three years ago when it became clear that Miami, Virginia Tech and BC were on the move and leaving his league on life support. Doubters wondered about the Big East's future TV and bowl tie-ins, not to mention the lack of power teams. Since then, the league has strengthened its infrastructure and begun to win big games on the field.

"I think we're a lot different than a year ago," said Tranchese. "Last year we hadn't played a game yet. It was all new. Now we've played each other and started to develop some rivalries and see what everyone is about."

West Virginia, which went 11-1 a year ago, was picked to repeat as conference champs in a preseason poll of Big East media released Tuesday. The Mountaineers received 18 of the 24 first-place votes. With a soft non-league schedule (Maryland and at East Carolina being the toughest tests), the Mountaineers could be in position for a return to the BCS and a shot at the national title game in Phoenix.

If that ever happens, reports of the Big East's football demise will likely end for good.

BIG EAST PRESEASON MEDIA POLL

1. West Virginia (18 first-place votes).
2. Louisville (6).
3. Pittsburgh.
4. Rutgers.

5. South Florida.

6. Connecticut.

7. Cincinnati.

8. Syracuse.

(Distributed by Scripps Howard News Service, www.scrippsnews.com.)

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/miller/279341_miller29.html

Bold schedule bolsters Pac-10

Saturday, July 29, 2006

By TED MILLER
P-I COLUMNIST

Oski, California's dementedly grinning, beer-bellied bear mascot, holds the Pac-10's national reputation in his paws.

That's one way of considering -- hyping -- the most important Pac-10 regular-season game in recent memory: California's visit to Tennessee on Sept. 2.

The Bears square off with an SEC power in front of 106,000 orange-clad loons hailing from the reddest of red states who might spontaneously combust if their beloved Volunteers lose to a bunch of lefty, artist-types from Berkeley.

Here's what would happen if Cal wins:

- The Pac-10 would announce to the nation that it is not merely USC and nine empty uniforms, an inaccurate but persistent perception during the Trojans' reign atop college football.
- Cal would justify a preseason ranking in the top half of the national polls and establish itself as a budding national power under Jeff Tedford.
- A platter would be prepared for already embattled Vols coach Phillip Fulmer's round and meaty noggin.

That's pretty heady stuff for a victory over a team that posted a losing record a year ago, but such is the semiannual battle for the Pac-10 to prove itself to a skeptical nation.

And a loss? It would reinforce the foundation of the hoary East Coast bias, which includes the codicil that the SEC invented college football, a perception that infiltrates even the minds of Pac-10 players.

"I think everybody is going to be a little (wide-eyed) at first, including me," Bears cornerback Daymeion Hughes said. "We've got to remember it's just another football game."

Cal's showdown in Dixie is merely the most important of an eyebrow-raising schedule of intersectional Pac-10 games this year.

While the Bears are enduring the 756th performance of "Rocky Top," Washington State will be at Auburn and USC at Arkansas.

The non-conference slate also features Oklahoma (Washington, Oregon), Nebraska (USC), LSU (Arizona), Minnesota (Cal), Colorado (Arizona State) and Notre Dame (USC, UCLA, Stanford).

While coaches will always claim conference games hold the most meaning, it's the matchups between elite BCS teams that establish a national pecking order, and the Pac-10 needs these games more than the ACC and SEC and even the top-heavy Big 12.

"It's a big factor in how we are regarded," Pac-10 commissioner Tom Hansen said. "That's one reason why it's
<http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/printer2/index.asp?ploc=b&refer=http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/mill...> 7/30/2006

more important for us to play those games than the Eastern schools -- because they are running around telling each other how good they are. We have to go out and find some way to prove how good we are.

"If we just sit back and play San Jose State and Idaho, we're not proving anything to anybody. We have to be more aggressive than some of the other conferences."

The ACC, SEC and Big 12 have separated themselves from the Pac-10, Big Ten and sagging Big East. They added teams, split into two divisions and play revenue-generating conference championship games.

The ACC operated on a peer-level or even slightly below the Pac-10 in football until it added Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College over the past two years. Now it's eye-to-eye with the SEC as the nation's best conference.

Hansen said Pac-10 presidents and athletic directors continue to have no interest in expansion, and new television contracts make that a moot point until 2011.

That means no significant revenue -- or attention -- boost for the Pac-10. Therefore, winning, often in hostile environments, is the only way to create buzz and maintain elite status.

"You have to be willing to play at your level or up in order to be a player in the BCS," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "I don't think people are going to respect you otherwise. ... Those are the marquee games that make or break your reputation."

Oregon has fought hard to earn legitimacy, and the program's ambitions under Bellotti and athletic director Bill Moos have paid off with the ultimate sign of respect: home-and-home game contracts with big-time foes.

The Ducks are putting the finishing touches on a contract with Georgia, a program notorious for refusing to travel outside the Southeast. The Bulldogs will join a list of past and future Autzen Stadium visitors that includes Michigan, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The idea of consistently luring those types of teams to Eugene would have seemed ludicrous 15 years ago.

Of course, Oregon went 10-1 last regular season and got screwed by the BCS, just like California did in 2004. Common denominator? No marquee non-conference games.

The BCS has left other teams griping, too, most notably Auburn in 2004. That outrage was based on the notion that an undefeated SEC team should *always* play for the national championship.

Poppycok. Auburn was justifiably waylaid because it played a wimpy non-conference schedule: Louisiana-Monroe, The Citadel and Louisiana Tech.

Many national poll voters, including me, severely penalize teams that play three patsies in order to create an illusion of formidability.

Conversely, voters rewarded Texas for its thrilling win at Ohio State last year, and in many cases protected the Buckeyes in the polls thereafter, refusing to hit them with a precipitous drop. Call it a tip of the cap for showing guts and creating excitement for fans.

That was the most anticipated game of 2005. And it will be again on Sept. 9 in Austin.

UCLA coach Karl Dorrell called the Bruins' 41-24 bludgeoning of Oklahoma last year "a statement game." That's what it is every time the Pac-10 squares off with a marquee BCS foe.

So Oski needs to roar when he ambles across the checkerboard end zone of Neyland Stadium.

UW ADDS NEBRASKA

Washington and Nebraska have agreed to a two-game, home-and-

away series in 2010 and 2011, Huskies athletic director Todd Turner announced Friday.

The first game will take place at Husky Stadium on Sept. 18, 2010. The Huskies will travel to Lincoln to play the Cornhuskers on Sept. 17 the following year.

Washington and Nebraska have played seven times in a series that dates to 1925. The series is tied at 3-3-1, but Nebraska won the past two meetings, 27-14 in Seattle in 1997 and 55-7 in Lincoln in 1998.

P-I columnist Ted Miller can be reached at 206-448-8017 or tedmiller@seattlepi.com.

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Article published Jul 26, 2006

Let's remember NCAA is a trademark brand

JASON KELLY
Tribune Columnist

Noble as their intentions might be, college sports reformers often come off as a peculiar breed of contortionist. Naval-gazing, thumb-sucking, hand-wringing, brow-beating, finger-pointing contortionists.

University presidents, in particular, assume that pose upon retirement as sure as they attach 'emeritus' to their title.

Some of them lobby from the soapbox of the Knight Commission for sweeping reforms they couldn't or wouldn't enact while they were in power.

"They have used the platform thus afforded them to hector their peers about problems that they themselves have allowed to fester and grow," Chester E. Finn, Jr. wrote in the Oct. 2001 issue of Commentary. "They have thereby proved only that they are far more valorous critics than leaders. Of true leaders, the current college and university scene is all but bereft."

Former Indiana University president Myles Brand now leads the NCAA on a platform of reform. Here are some radical ideas for his suggestion box and sitting college presidents everywhere:

- **Remove restrictions on endorsements and signing with agents.** Grab the third rail of college sports and admit the amateur ideal doesn't exist and hasn't for years, for decades, forever.

Former USC quarterback Matt Leinart appeared in commercials last season as a celebrity spokesman for NCAA football. That didn't threaten his eligibility.

He made a spontaneous comment promoting "Sports Center" into an ESPN camera on the field after a game. That did.

Leinart made no money from either the NCAA or ESPN for using his image to promote their products. Yet the NCAA, in its infinite self-interest, replayed its own Leinart ad like a "Don't drink and drive" spot during prom season. For the "Sports Center" thing, it threatened to suspend him for the Rose Bowl (that didn't happen, of course, but that's another story). That lack of shame in using revenue-restricted athletes as complimentary endorsers in its own ad campaigns illuminates the NCAA's lack of institutional conscience.

If Leinart had put his stubbly mug to use in a commercial enterprise that paid him for his time and marketability, he could have been drummed out of college football for debasing it with capitalistic interests. Imagine that Brady Quinn could become a spokesman for Chipotle. He mentions it so often in response to "favorite food" questions, the chain ought to pay him anyway.

Or that Reggie Bush and his parents could accept a sweetheart lease from an agent as a loan

against future earnings. That would be reasonable earnest money for the rights to a percentage of his potential net worth.

What effect would that have? It wouldn't make them stronger or faster or smarter. Just wealthier, and at least when it comes to its own bank account, the NCAA sees no problem with that.

- **Make athletic scholarships binding four-year contracts.** Forget the old debate about schools paying players. A scholarship, and the potential value of the education it provides, compensates them plenty. Especially if archaic rules don't restrict other forms of outside athletic income.

Performance on the field never should be the basis for erecting a barrier to an education, but one-year, renewable scholarships make sports a priority. Fail on the field and you could lose the means to an education. Institutions must invest in the welfare of the student first, regardless of the direction their athletic career takes.

- **Offer an academic major in athletics, in the same serious spirit as music or art.** In one of those cloying NCAA commercials -- "most of us go pro in something other than sports" -- a cocky saxophone player blows his own horn. He expects to end up in Chicago or New Orleans because "most good jazz musicians do." As if professional success as a performer requires nothing more than keeping his reed moist.

If he made a similar proclamation about his professional sports potential, a familiar lament would echo about misplaced priorities. Doesn't he realize he needs "something to fall back on" because sports provides only a fleeting living to the few who make it?

To cushion his eventual, inevitable fall off the stage, a sax player might have a music degree. An athlete has no comparable option.

Credit hours for varsity sports participation -- the performance element of athletics major -- would be only one way to back up platitudes about its educational value with the currency of a diploma.

Cross-list courses with sociology, psychology, medicine, journalism, education, business, all professional athletic fields as much as Wrigley and Soldier.

- **Transform the NCAA into an accrediting agency.** Instead of strangling logic with rules larded on top of rules in the name of imaginary amateurism, put the emphasis where it belongs in a university environment: on education.

All the bureaucracy member institutions inflict on each other has more to do with jockeying for competitive position.

"The rules are created by the members, not by the NCAA. So if I find a way to gain an advantage on you, you create a rule and gain an advantage on me, then I create a rule," Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White said. "It's chess."

That says a lot about the priorities of the members and their leaders, those future retired hectoring presidents emeritus.

Instead of looking for an edge, they could enact rigorous accreditation of athletic departments, like the engineering and business schools endure every couple of years. As long as the means to an education remain sound, a school has covered its debt to a prospective student-athlete.

- **In accredited athletic departments, students, not coaches, should bear the responsibility for their education and graduation.** Between phone calls, new Indiana basketball coach Kelvin

Sampson said something honest.

Asked at his introductory press conference about how many of his players graduate, Sampson said, "All that want to ... We've never kept one from it."

Buck-passing sentiment aside, he had a point.

Disgust over graduation rates for athletes never acknowledges that individual responsibility might be involved, as though the system alone failed them. Maybe it did. Among other things, that system creates incentives for the best athletes to go pro as soon as possible and reserves the right to strip scholarships from the worst.

Removing those barriers -- and assuring no shortcuts exist -- would place the burden for the quality of their education on the students themselves. After that, it's up to them. That alone would be a valuable lesson.

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Early entry irritates some reformers

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Tribune Staff Writers

Jimmy Clausen doesn't plan to wait until fall of 2007 to settle in at Notre Dame.

Standing at a podium at the College Football Hall of Fame to announce his verbal commitment to the Irish, the highly regarded quarterback informed his audience that he intends to graduate high school in December and enroll at Notre Dame in January.

During his announcement, Clausen was asked what he plans to major in.

"I have no idea," Clausen said to a room full of Irish fans that responded with nervous laughter before one fan said just loud enough to hear, "football."

Should the admissions office approve his request for early enrollment, Clausen will follow in the footsteps of James Aldridge, George West and Chris Stewart, three current ND players who became the first early enrollees in the program's history this past January. It was widely believed that Notre Dame's prior hesitancy to admit students mid-year was hurting the program in recruiting battles against schools that did allow early enrollees. At least one former Irish player does not like the new trend. Not at Notre Dame. Not anywhere.

Allen Sack, a defensive end on the 1966 ND national championship team, is a member of the Drake Group, a national college faculty lobbying group that fights for reform in college athletics. One of the group's major missions has been to restore freshman ineligibility, a hallmark of intercollegiate sports during Sack's playing days.

"Not only have we been totally ignored on that type of thing, but they have actually taken it back the other direction," said Sack, a professor at the University of New Haven (Conn.). "Now it's not just freshman eligibility. Now you have seniors in high school eligible (to practice). It's gone the opposite direction."

In discussing the issue, ND admissions director Dan Saracino told the Tribune in November that the school still won't let just anybody in early.

"We just need to be comfortable with the students that we make the exception for," Saracino said. "We're looking at it on an individual case-by-case basis. And we're surely open to other students. We're not just doing this for football." Sack said he's raised the issue of freshman ineligibility with NCAA president Myles Brand, but got the impression that the NCAA has no plans to budge on the issue. The trend toward early enrollment is further proof.

"To see it going back the other direction pains me tremendously," Sack said. "I think it really saved me when I was at Notre Dame to have that one year when we weren't traveling with the team.

"We were practicing. We were getting beat up pretty well, but it's a whole other ballgame when you

start jumping on that plane and flying out to California and Oklahoma every week. How do you sit on the plane and read chemistry when you're worrying about what's happening the next day? When you're thinking about the next day and playing in front of 100,000 people? I mean, come on."
