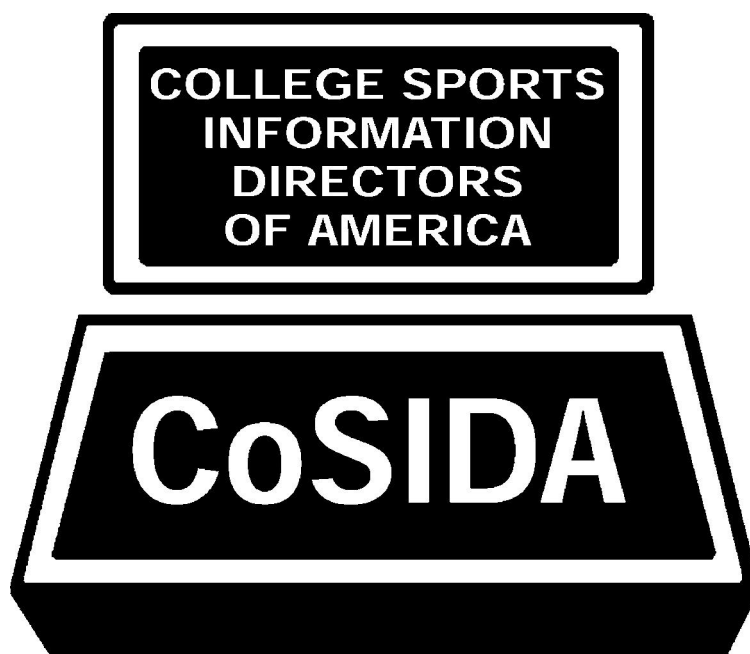


CoSIDA NEWS

Intercollegiate Athletics News from Around the Nation



NOVEMBER 28, 2006

Tuesday, November 28, 2006 1:00 a.m.

UF rejects proposed cut in sports money

THE NCAA SAYS SPORTS ARE GROWING TOO COSTLY.

By LIZ LEVINE
Alligator Contributing Writer

The NCAA recently suggested that Division I colleges cut spending on athletics, but UF won't be cutting costs for sports anytime soon.

According to a press release, NCAA President Myles Brand and the 50-member Presidential Task Force agree that the financial state of intercollegiate athletics needs adjustment.

According to research, sports spending in some Division I schools has exceeded the costs of higher education by two to three times in recent years.

However, UF athletics director Jeremy Foley said he doesn't think the NCAA should try to dictate how much money schools spend on sports.

"If I could find a budget to cut that would make sense, yeah, I would do it," he said.

The budget for sports at UF stands at nearly \$70 million - a \$5 million increase from last year's \$65 million. But even though the school spends this much to maintain the success of its athletic program, most athletes still realize the importance of a good education, Foley said.

The graduation rate of athletes at UF is 91 percent, compared to the national average of 77 percent, he said.

"I think a majority of our athletes are taking advantage of the opportunities we're giving to them," Foley said. "I think the academic reputation of this school helps us in all sports."

Gregg Troy, the head coach of the men's and women's swimming teams, thinks it is unnecessary to cut spending on sports.

"I think a lot of the money is spent on their academic experience," he said. "I think it gives them a lot of help and gives them unique opportunities."

Troy said he thinks there should be different courses offered for athletes seeking professional athletic careers, and there should be a specific curriculum to help shape their skills.

"In some ways, they're not much different than someone who comes to school to be a doctor or a lawyer," Troy said. "It's their chosen vocation. There are certain skills they need to have."

A good academic program combined with a good athletic program enhances the

school's image, he said.

"It creates a feeling of camaraderie among alumni," he said. "It creates pride for the organization."

Reggie Lewis, a sociology senior on the UF football team, is taking advantage of his educational opportunity in college. But he doesn't think athletes get enough.

"They need to spend more," he said. "We do too much for the school, and we don't get no money."

Willie Perry, a sprinter on the men's track and field team, said he thinks some schools spend too much money on sports. But UF, he said, should spend more money on its athletic program.

"I think they should spend as much money on other sports as they do on football," Perry said.

He thinks athletes should be paid because of the publicity they bring to the school.

Chris Richard, a sociology senior on the men's basketball team, is also taking advantage of his academic experience.

"I'm in my fourth year here, so it would be dumb for me to come this far and quit," he said.

But if he could have left early he would have.

"I didn't think that I was in a good enough situation to leave early," he said.

Sports are important to UF because of the publicity they bring to the school, Richard said.

Particularly, he said more money should go toward travel expenses, practice facilities and equipment. In addition, he said athletes should be treated as employees.

While the NCAA thinks colleges should cut sports spending, some athletes and administrators believe just the opposite.

"We need to be paid," Richard said. "We are too busy to get jobs. Our sports are like jobs because of the amount of time we put into them."



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THE LAST ROW CRITIC'S CORNER

Current coaches shouldn't be polled
Teddy Greenstein

November 24, 2006

The morning after Florida State's sloppy season-opening victory over Miami, someone in the Ohio State football office asked coach Jim Tressel for his take on the nationally televised game.

"I didn't even know they had played," Tressel said.

And he's one of 63 coaches who vote in the USA Today poll, which makes up one-third of the formula used for the Bowl Championship Series standings.

The point is not to rag on Tressel. He's paid to win games and develop student-athletes, not to determine whether USC's loss to Oregon State should keep the Trojans from playing the Buckeyes for the national title.

There's something inherently wrong about giving coaches a say in who plays in the big-money bowls.

Did Derek Jeter get an MVP vote? No, that would be a conflict of interest. Well, so is this.

"Everyone knows my bias," says Notre Dame's Charlie Weis, who also votes in the poll.

"I'm prejudiced toward Notre Dame. I'm not an objective observer. I'm biased, I'll admit it. Shoot me."

No need for that. But the USA Today poll should be replaced by the Master Coaches Poll, which former sports agent Andy Curtin created last year. Each Sunday 16 former coaches (17 before Bo Schembechler died), including George Welsh, R.C. Slocum, John Cooper and Terry Donahue, submit their rankings. Then they speak by conference call Thursday to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the teams.

"Not only do we have a chance to watch all these games, we have all the areas of the country covered," says Cooper, the former Ohio State coach. "The best thing we do is get on the phone and talk about these teams. I don't think there's any question that it's the most accurate and most objective."

And Curtin says the coaches aren't homers for their former teams.

"They can't get away with that," he says. "They police each other."

The coaches who vote in the USA Today poll don't police each other; they punish each other.

After the 2005 regular season, Weis ranked Notre Dame No. 4, two spots ahead of Oregon. Ducks coach Mike Bellotti had his team fourth and the Irish ninth.

Notre Dame got a BCS bid. Oregon did not.

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News

National news media cover Harper apology; College, UND reactions mixed

BY WILLIAM SCHPERO

Published on Tuesday, November 28, 2006

WEB UPDATE, November 28, 6:00 a.m.

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A week since Dartmouth Athletic Director Josie Harper apologized in The Dartmouth for hosting the University of North Dakota "Fighting Sioux" in a December hockey tournament, dozens of national and regional media outlets have seized upon the growing controversy over the incident.

In the Nov. 21 letter to the editor, Harper apologized for scheduling UND when its presence "will understandably offend and hurt people within our community." She also noted that UND's position toward its "Fighting Sioux" nickname is "offensive and wrong."

Reaction to this nationally publicized issue -- featured in The Boston Globe, Inside Higher Ed and the front page of ESPN.com -- has been mixed. Many students, faculty and alumni at Dartmouth and UND are both appreciative and critical of Harper's comments. Nonetheless, the overwhelmingly vocal feedback has criticized the letter.

Many of those who disapproved of Harper's letter said it improperly focused on UND as opposed to highlighting Dartmouth's specific problems.

Donald Anderson, a vocal critic who graduated from UND in 1965, questioned the overall appropriateness of the letter.

"North Dakota is pervasive with Indian culture," Anderson said. "I think [the letter is] just wrong because [Harper] has commented on something she really doesn't understand."

Jennifer Behr-Devlin, a junior at UND, echoed Anderson's beliefs.

"I think it was really inappropriate -- she is insinuating that the problems that [Dartmouth's] campus is having are the same problems that UND is having," she said.

In an interview with The Dartmouth on Monday, Harper said she thought many people had misperceived the letter. She said the intention of the letter was not to make a statement toward UND, but to address timely issues at Dartmouth.

"Hindsight is 20-20, and if I had to do it over again I probably would have wanted to be as strong and clear to [the Dartmouth] population as possible of how I felt," Harper said. "Maybe it would have been better to say how North Dakota deals with this is their own issue, and I'm addressing the folks here at Dartmouth about how we will deal with [our] issues."

Harper's letter responded, in part, to a two-page advertisement in The Dartmouth sponsored by the College's Native American Council. The advertisement outlined what the organization said were incidences of racism and injustice on campus and coincided with the release of a letter by College President James Wright discussing his concerns on the

matter.

In an interview with The Dartmouth, Wright said he thinks "it is unfortunate that some people set out to make other people feel less welcome."

Countering criticisms of Harper, some Native American students at UND praised the letter.

"We are pleased that we have support nationally, even if we don't have it locally," said Monique Vondall-Rieke, director of the Native American Media Center at UND. "The majority of the Native American population are against [UND's nickname]."

Frank Sage, president of UND's Bridges Native American student group, criticized the UND administration for not making an effort to curb discrimination on campus and applauded Harper's statement. Bridges has been a vocal opponent of UND's decision to maintain the "Fighting Sioux" nickname.

"I would say that is probably one of the first baby steps in the right direction and that [Dartmouth] is one of the only schools to apologize about any mascots or logos coming onto their campus," Sage said.

Native American students at the College who spoke with The Dartmouth said they shared this sentiment.

"I think it was necessary that [Harper] took this action given all of the issues of cultural sensitivity that have been going on this term," said Schuyler Chew '09, co-president of Native Americans at Dartmouth. "I believe we should not play teams that have Native American mascots -- allowing them to play is in violation of [Dartmouth's] principle of community."

Wright, while clarifying that Harper's statement was not necessarily indicative of overall College policy, affirmed the letter's acceptability.

"I would never discourage any of my colleagues from sharing their views -- I was not aware that she sent [the letter] but I have no problem with her sending it," Wright said. "I have tremendous regard for Josie Harper as an athletic director as she has done an exceptional job and she's running a first-rate program."

Wright went on to assert, however, that Dartmouth would honor its agreement to host UND this year.

"North Dakota is coming here to play hockey and we'll welcome them warmly -- they've always had a good hockey team," Wright said, noting that "it is time to assess" College policy on hosting teams with Native American symbols.

Harper explained that her letter was approved by Dean of the College Dan Nelson and other upper-level administrators before she submitted it to The Dartmouth. Nelson could not be reached for comment.

Harper also stated that Brian Austin, senior associate director of Dartmouth intercollegiate athletics, had given prior notice to UND Athletic Director Tom Buning about the letter. UND is presently involved in a lawsuit with the NCAA over its continued use of the nickname "Fighting Sioux".

"[Buning] said that [UND] goes through this all the time, that people have even dropped them off of their schedules," Harper said. "We assured them that when they came [to Dartmouth] there would be no disrespect and we would run a first-class tournament."

Harper explained that the College will soon begin to explore its policy on hosting teams with Native American mascots.

"I think the president is putting together a committee, and we are going to work with the Native American community and Student Assembly to talk about how we can be a little more sensitive and helpful in educating our students, and

educating even ourselves," Harper said. "We will be reviewing our policy as to whether or not we will engage in scheduling contests with schools [that have nicknames or mascots of this nature]."

UND's Office of University Relations referred all questions to the state attorney general's office, given the University's pending legal action with the NCAA. Liz Brocker, spokesperson for the North Dakota Attorney General's Office, declined to comment.

Harper said she hoped the end result would increase awareness of Native American issues on campus.

"This is a time for challenging and interesting dialogue," Harper said. "It is not a time to pick up and start throwing stones again." 

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Article published Nov 28, 2006

Getting behind the BCS

By Tim Brennan
Staff Writer

Five days from now, trying to make like the best playoff system in all of sports (the NCAA basketball tournament), FOX will televise the announcement of the BCS college football playoff participants. There are just five games, so the half-hour special to announce the 10 teams may not be necessary, but college football needs to try to make this as exciting as possible.

There is not enough space in this entire paper to re-publish all of the bad words that have been written about the Bowl Championship Series, and I, surprisingly enough, will not add to the bad-mouthing of college football.

Do I think there should be a playoff system? Absolutely. But there are a lot more positives than people want to look at in the current system.

The BCS is flawed, no doubt, but it's not completely useless.

The best part about the NCAA basketball tournament is that every game means everything to those two teams. The regular season, for three quarters of the field means nothing. In college football the whole season is like a playoff.

If you lose you still have a chance, but not much. Let's take the last two weekends for example. Two weeks ago the Ohio State-Michigan game, which already means everything to the Midwest, came under the national spotlight. And not just for Saturday. The build up for that game began a month earlier when the two teams were set on a collision course for the right to play in the national championship game.

With a playoff system, that game means absolutely nothing. If you have eight or even six teams in a playoff, that game simply decides what seed those teams will be positioned at heading into the playoffs.

With a playoff, that game probably means less than ever. I know it sounds strange, the top two teams in the country squaring off, and it means less than any time before, but hear me out.

Someone has to lose that game, and with a playoff, many people would expect those teams to get together again in a national championship tilt. So the Nov. 18 game would just be another regular-season contest.

Return to the BCS world and following a narrow Ohio State win, the attention turns to the next week -- Notre Dame and Southern Cal. Could one of the two leapfrog the Wolverines to get to No. 2 in the standings and have a chance at the title?

See what I'm getting at here, every week there is a big game, a loss takes a team out of contention. You may see that as a bad thing, but I see that as the most exciting regular season in all of sports.

There is one change to the system that needs to be made, and things will go smoother. The change is in the polls. Do away with pre-season polls and have the first human polls taken a week before the first BCS ranking is released. Too much of the system is based on where a team begins in pre-season polls (see Rutgers). Once that's done, the only problem comes when three major schools finish undefeated after all playing a fierce schedule, which rarely happens.

It may not be perfect, but the system is not going any where any time soon. It is what it is. Instead of bashing it all the time, try to embrace it and each week that is played out.

You might just enjoy a four-month playoff.

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Nov. 27

NCAA Panel Disses the Faculty

By [Tom Palaima](#)

Back in January 2005, Myles Brand, president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, commissioned the [NCAA Presidential Task Force on the Future of Division I Intercollegiate Athletics](#). The task force consisted of 50 university and college presidents and chancellors. It was charged with addressing, *mutatis mutandis*, the two major problems [now under investigation](#) by the House Ways and Means Committee of the United States Congress: (1) the financing of intercollegiate athletics programs; and (2) “the danger of cultural isolation of student-athletes from the intellectual purposes and academic values of our universities.” The NCAA panel worked for 18 months, during which leaders of two of its key subcommittees retired. One of them was Larry Faulkner, the well-regarded now-former president of my own institution, the University of Texas at Austin.

[The report](#) is 64 pages long, but you need not be intimidated by its length. Mimicking the expensive sleekness of the Bible-thick media guides that high-dollar NCAA sports programs like the University of Texas at Austin produce yearly for all their major sports, the report has 13 glossy, full-page photographs of athlete-students either competing in sports events or studying among Greek columns, library stacks, laboratory flasks or computer terminals. Four pages give a photographic rogues’ gallery of smiling presidents and chancellors.

By my estimate, the report proper, with its few statistical charts and figures, runs about 32 pages. In its present form, it is a slick sports brochure, not a serious study.

I concentrate here, though, on the report’s contents, and particularly its assessment of the role of faculty in contributing to or solving the problems it addresses. Frankly, I cannot believe that the man I knew and worked with when he was president at UT Austin, Larry Faulkner, supported what the task force has to say about faculty. Paraphrase or minimal quotation would raise suspicions of distortion on my part. So let me give rather full quotations.

Critical to the future of re-establishing institutional accountability for intercollegiate athletics is the underdeveloped potential for informed faculty engagement in support of presidential leadership. Hampering such engagement for decades has been uninformed, biased faculty members who attack athletics unfairly. (P. 15)

Further hampering the ability for faculty to engage athletics issues and support presidents in the leadership of college sports is the inevitable tension between the horizontal culture of faculty as a peer-driven, loosely organized body and the hierarchical, top-down nature of campus administrations. Nonetheless, organizations

designed by and for faculty — and both old and new — will be instrumental in diminishing the effect of this tension. (P. 15)

Faculty athletics representatives and faculty senates must work together to bring about a new relationship between those charged with setting the standards for academic achievement and those who guide the course for intercollegiate athletics, and they must do so from positions of well-informed members of the academy itself. (P. 17)

To play a productive role, faculty members must provide informed advice, and they must make the effort to understand the intercollegiate athletics enterprise — the facts of the matter — and not merely accept pre-existing biases. Faculty members would never tolerate superficial, uninformed pronouncements in their own disciplines, and they should not do so when they are engaged in making recommendations about intercollegiate athletics. (P. 33)

The faculty athletics representative (FAR) plays a key role in this regard. The FAR on each campus is the faculty member best positioned to appreciate both the dynamics and problems of intercollegiate athletics, and he or she is most likely to understand student-athletes' academic well-being. (P. 33)

Let us start with one major point. The conspicuous problems that the task force addresses arose under the authority of college and university presidents, chancellors, regents and boards of trustees. These problems relate to institutional goals and priorities, educational principles and values, fund-raising methods and resource management. They are so egregious that Rep. William Thomas, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, in [his official letter](#) to Myles Brand on October 2, easily formulated 25 detailed, multi-part questions for the NCAA to answer, just for starters.

Concerned faculty have been asking the same kinds of questions since the 1920s, with the best of motives. We care deeply about our students and about the western tradition of learning.

Admittedly, I am viewing this report from the perspective of a professor devoted to research and teaching. I have 20 years of experience co-existing with what was recently named the No. 1 NCAA sports program in the nation. If faculty were to have a bias against NCAA sports anywhere, it should be at the University of Texas at Austin, where colossal and costly new sports facilities house the NCAA Division I football champions, a Sweet 16 basketball team, and a perennial contender for the College World Series title. But this is not the case.

The faculty council at UT Austin appointed committees in 1993 and 1997-99 that identified many of the very problems the NCAA Presidential Task Force examined. These committees gathered accurate information and proposed sensible solutions in a cooperative spirit that still prevails on our campus. Our faculty did not lobby to increase coaches' salaries to the levels they have now reached. Our presidents and regents signed off on those increases.

The head football coach at UT now makes a base salary of \$2.55 million per year. By comparison, the entire instructional budget (faculty salaries and other teaching-related expenses) of UT's number-one ranked petroleum engineering department is only \$2 million. The average salaries of the 11 assistant football coaches last year easily outstripped the average salaries of full professors in our law school, the highest paid full professors at our institution.

Faculty did not have the authority to stop the recruitment of a men's basketball team whose average SAT score is 370 points below the current student body average. No faculty committee at UT Austin proposed constructing an academic environment for football players that sequesters them in their own high-tech study facility with their own tutors and advisers and supervisors, and still leaves them, year in and year out, trailing the entire Big 12 Conference and most of the nation in six-year graduation rates — 40 percent is the official NCAA calculation.

In 1996-98, at a time when the Texas Legislature was sharply curtailing its yearly appropriations to the UT system, UT embarked on a \$100 million stadium expansion project that expended lots of valuable political capital. It was pushed through by Chancellor Bill Cunningham, who was, you guessed it, a former president of UT Austin.

Don't take my biased faculty word for it. Take the word of ex-chancellor Hans Mark. Mark, who preceded Cunningham, resisted for years the strong lobbying of a group on the Board of Regents who wanted UT athletics to go big-time in the Big 12.

As mentioned earlier, the UT faculty council appointed a committee in 1997-99 to look into many of the same issues regarding NCAA athletics that Congress and the NCAA Presidential Task Force are now looking at. The so-called Wright Committee [made reasonable suggestions](#) about how faculty could be effective in balancing academics and athletics and controlling costly sports building programs. Nonetheless, last spring a new \$150 million stadium expansion project (now further increased to \$178 million) was approved by the regents and by President Faulkner with no appreciable faculty input.

Our current president is trying to follow through on Faulkner's ambitious plan to add 300 faculty, in order to lower UT's extremely high student/faculty ratio. To do this, we need more office space, classrooms and laboratories on the central campus, where space was already at a premium in the mid-'90s.

Disregarding the academic side of institutional planning, the \$100 million expansion project authorized by Cunningham and the Board of Regents in 1996-98 converted a multi-use stadium (football, track and field, high school athletics events) into a football-only facility. Precious space was then used to build an outdoor football practice field, an air-conditioned indoor football practice field, a track-and-field stadium, and a deluxe athletics center.

Faculty were not consulted about this questionable use of resources, especially scientists who have to commute from central campus to laboratories at a distant satellite facility. Nor were UT's approximately 35,000 undergraduates. Faculty would love to accommodate their pressing need for more courses offered during prime time. But existing classrooms are booked solid even during non-peak hours.

The NCAA Presidential Task Force criticizes faculty for bias, distortion, superficial uninformed pronouncements, inability to work within a hierarchical structure, lack of effort to understand intercollegiate athletics, and lack of cooperation with the faculty athletics representatives (FAR's) who are "best positioned to appreciate both the dynamics and problems of intercollegiate athletics."

Their criticisms about faculty unwillingness or inability to understand the nature and realities of NCAA programs are ironic, given that the NCAA Web site lists 15 membership categories including president/CEO, athletics director, current NCAA student/athlete, coach and marketing/public relations/development. But it recognizes no category for faculty, professor, teacher or educator.

The Task Force should provide documentation for the serious charge that faculty abandon their professional scholarly ethics when taking up matters pertaining to NCAA athletics. Such statements are what the late Mayor Daley of Chicago once called malicious "insinuating." We may all call them what they are: false.

At UT Austin, faculty are reduced by the Handbook of Operating Procedures and Regental Rules to a minor, advisory role in making decisions about large-scale building projects, budgets and salary structures, and the academic side of NCAA athletics. The faculty council itself is marginalized in regard to academics and athletics. Oversight falls to separate Men's and Women's Athletics Councils. These committees have special members appointed by the regents and single yearly faculty representatives chosen by the president from a slate of candidates proposed by the faculty council. Like the FAR's, whom the NCAA Presidential Task Force hails as sources of unbiased perspective, these positions traditionally go to sports boosters who enjoy the perks and insider status their appointments bring them. The results, again, are clear.

The report of the NCAAA Presidential Task Force on the Future of Division I Intercollegiate Athletics makes clear why problems with big-time college sports, identified, according to the report, as long ago as 1915, have never been solved. College and university presidents and chancellors are supposed to set agendas that support the noble social aims of their institutions. They have the power to prevent minor local problems from growing into national issues. They also have the authority to mobilize reform at their own institutions.

In regard to the problems with NCAA athletics, they have failed seriously in all three of these areas. And by going out of their way to blame faculty, the 50 presidents and chancellors of the NCAA task force missed an opportunity to unite with faculty to solve problems that our nation's elected leaders want us to solve.

Tom Palaima is Dickson Centennial Professor of Classics and the director of the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory at the University of Texas at Austin.

The original story and user comments can be viewed online at
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FROM THE CHEAP SEATS

In a pretend playoff, our champ would be?

Jerry Greene
FROM THE CHEAP SEATS

November 28, 2006

Play along.

What if we had an NCAA Division I-A football playoff, something you believe to be more important than tax relief and gas for less than \$2 a gallon? What if the BCS system of two human polls and one toaster poll were used to provide the seeding of an eight-team tournament?

The basic question is if Ohio State would win anyway. If that's true, then you really have been arguing about nothing. But I have actually played the first BCS Championship Playoffs, using the scientifically acclaimed system known as JMIU (Jerry Made It Up).

Here's what happens:

ROUND ONE

No. 1 Ohio State vs. No. 8 Boise State: We wanted Boise State to go all the way so we could have the national championship decided on that blue field. But the Hurricanes have the field tied up, so we had to lean toward Ohio State in a close one -- Ohio State 66, Boise State 6.

No. 2 Southern Cal vs. No. 7 Wisconsin: There would be great justice in this because Wisconsin isn't even in the Big Game talk when it should be. This would be the first shocker -- Wisconsin 26, Southern Cal 24.

No. 3 Michigan vs. No. 6 Louisville: This game would be marred during the week preceding it by Louisville Coach Bobby Petrino's daily denials that he is talking to any other university about a job. Then during halftime, Petrino would announce that in order to make \$5 million a year, he has accepted the jobs at Miami and Alabama. -- Michigan 76, Louisville 17.

No. 4 Florida vs. No. 5 LSU: Controversy continues as Gators Coach Urban Meyer threatens to pull his team off the field in protest of his lowly fourth-place seeding. Meyer has to be sedated after the game, screaming, "It's over! It's over!" And for Florida, it was. -- LSU 28, Florida 4.

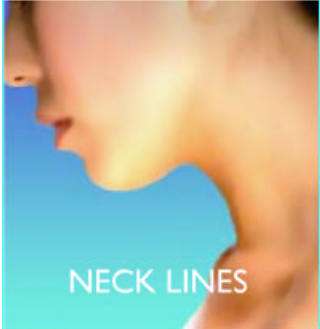
ROUND TWO

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No. 1 Ohio State vs. No. 7 Wisconsin: The one team Ohio State doesn't want to play. -- Wisconsin 17, Ohio State 16.

No. 3 Michigan vs. No. 5 LSU: Billed as the conference showdown between the Big 10 and the SEC. And we all know how that turns out. -- LSU 46, Michigan 36.

BCS PLAYOFF CHAMPIONSHIP

No. 5 LSU vs. No. 7 Wisconsin: I'm from the South but there's something about those Collegiate Cheeseheads of Destiny. -- Wisconsin 24, LSU 21.

What we're saying is that, in another reality, the Wisconsin team that is coming to the Cap One Bowl could be winning the national crown instead.

At least in my head.

NOT 'LADY,' BUT BRADY

If the phrase "homoerotic homage" makes you uncomfortable, you may not want to watch and listen to "Brady," a video currently available at YouTube.com. Sung to the tune of Kenny Rogers' hit, "Lady," it can be taken as a satirical commentary on our love for star athletes -- or it can be taken, uh, straight as an ode to "the starter in my fantasy league for two."

It's really quite good.

The Boston Herald reached video creator "BradyFan83," a married attorney from Texas, who said he did it to be funny. And he's planning a sequel -- about Emmitt Smith.

MARK, JOSE, NEITHER?

Been waiting for this. Mark McGwire's name is on the baseball writers' Hall of Fame list as eligible for the first time in 2007. And Jose Canseco is there, too. If you had a vote, would you deny McGwire his place in the Hall? Would you vote for Canseco to applaud the changes at least indirectly related to his book? Or would you say it's a cold day in Bud Selig's office before either gets in? Discuss.

SOME NOTES, NOT VOTES

Congratulations, Chizik: After leaving the UCF coaching staff for glory at Auburn and Texas as a defensive coordinator, Gene Chizik is going to be the head coach at Iowa State. He badly wanted the UCF job offered to George O'Leary, so it will be interesting to track his career.

Philadelphia Mayor John Street during a ceremony honoring National League MVP Ryan Howard: "We are very, very proud of our Phillies, and we are certainly proud of Ron Howard and his great achievements." Me, too, especially Apollo 13.

What about Leavitt? If you're searching for a head coach, shouldn't you call Jim Leavitt after what he's done at South Florida the last two years? If Miami is interested, the 'Canes better hurry before Leavitt considers it a step down.

USC Coach Pete Carroll on how his club has approached the last month of the season: "It has been a playoff run for us." Smart man.

The Seats return Wednesday. Jerry joins Mike Bianchi and Ralph Irvin at 9 a.m. for Keep'n Score on 740 the

Orlando Sentinel

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/sports/local/orl-referees2406nov24,0,5169445.story?coll=orl-sports-headlines>

Selecting the stripes

There are no easy answers when it comes to changing college football's system for assigning officials.

Andrew Carter
Sentinel Staff Writer

November 24, 2006

It's a simple question: Why do conferences need their own football officiating crews?

So why is it so hard to answer?

Some say it's a matter of logistics -- that hiring, training and assigning crews is best handled by conferences instead of a hypothetical national governing body.

"It becomes complex as to how and who is going to do the assigning [in a national system]," said John Soffey, the Big East's coordinator of football officials. "I also think that conferences -- they want to make sure they're getting the best officials."

Some say it's a matter of familiarity.

"It's because you're comfortable with the officials that you have," said Gerald Austin, Conference USA's coordinator of football officials. "You know what kind of philosophy they're operating under."

Some say, well, that's the way it has always been, and change is hard, you know?

"Once you get a process like that going, unless there's a really compelling reason to change it, why change it?" asks Rogers Redding, the SEC's football officiating coordinator. "It's like, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Well, people might argue that it's broke."

Oklahoma fans, for instance.

On Sept. 16, the Sooners lost by a point at Oregon in large part because Pacific-10 Conference officials blew two important calls in the final 72 seconds. Without that defeat, Oklahoma right now is another one-loss team in a muddled national-title race.

And the Florida-Florida State rivalry -- which resumes Saturday -- has seen its fair share of referee controversy.

The first came in 1966 in Tallahassee. FSU trailed 22-19 with 17 seconds left and the ball on UF's 45. FSU quarterback Gary Pajcic launched a pass into the end zone to wide receiver Lane Fenner, who appeared to make a miraculous over-the-shoulder catch with his right knee down in the end zone. But field judge Doug Moseley,

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an SEC official, ruled he was out of bounds. FSU missed a long field goal on the final play that would've tied the score.

Of more recent vintage, games in 1996 in Tallahassee and 2003 in Gainesville -- both involving ACC officials -- left Gators fans seething. In '96, then-coach Steve Spurrier said Danny Wuerffel was the victim of numerous uncalled late hits in FSU's 24-21 victory. In '03, UF fans -- and players -- counted as many as six questionable calls that went against the Gators, enabling FSU to come away with a 38-34 win.

Evaluation or protection?

For as long as anybody can remember, conferences have hired, trained, assigned and evaluated their own refs. It's a system that works right up until a team benefits from mistakes made by officials representing its conference or when a team is hurt by questionable calls made by a crew from the opponent's league.

Situations like the Oregon-Oklahoma game and the UF-FSU games further fuel the perception that conferences are protecting their teams through suspect officiating. College football is, after all, a big business, one in which teams and conferences stand to make -- or lose -- millions depending on the outcome of a game or two.

With all the money at stake, and to better protect the integrity of the game, some wonder whether it's time for college football to adapt a new officiating system, one in which officials would be placed in a regional or national pool -- a system similar to that in college basketball. While conferences don't employ their own crews in basketball, they still employ officiating coordinators who handle assigning and grading.

"The real question," SEC Commissioner Mike Slive said, "is given the nature of college football and given the fact that it has grown this way, is there another way to do it? But doing it another way, is the other way better?"

Before moving forward, one must understand the present. And the present officiating system varies from conference to conference.

In non-conference games involving SEC and ACC schools, for instance, the visiting team's league supplies the officials. The Pac-10 uses the opposite approach: Pac-10 crews officiate non-conference games when the Pac-10 team is at home. There is one exception: A Big Ten crew oversees the Notre Dame at USC game.

Some schools can't agree on which officials to use. Louisville is from the Big East and Kentucky from the SEC. But when they meet, a Big Ten crew does the game.

If the current system seems murky and hard to understand, that's because some believe it is.

"I think it makes it difficult when you're playing out-of-conference. . . . I think that causes some problems and may be not the best and most efficient way to do it," UCF Athletic Director Keith Tribble said.

Tribble said he doesn't believe any conference's officials are biased. But he said he does understand the perception that bias exists. A national governing body over football officials, a system Tribble favors, might eliminate suspicions.

"You probably get a better pool of officials. You have a way of really making sure that you have the best possible officials because they'll be competitive against each other on a national basis and not on a regional or conference basis," Tribble said. "And, in the end, I think that really improves the game."

Almost all in favor

Of the five conference officiating coordinators reached for this story -- Soffey, Redding, Austin, the Pac-10's Verle Sorgen and the ACC's Tommy West -- West is the only one who opposes exploring a regional or national

system. He opposes the idea because of logistical concerns.

"To [adapt a regional system] you would have to have a regional office, a regional staff; you would have to have regional training, you'd have to have quite an office staff just to handle the phone calls from the coaches," West said. "Imagine how complicated it could become."

The other four said given the right circumstances, they'd support a move in which college football would adopt a national or regional system.

"I think we're just waiting for some plan to be formulated," Soffey said. "I don't think there's any of us who are against it."

When it comes down to it, though, conference officiating coordinators admit they have little power to affect policy.

"I think [another officiating system] is going to be examined," Sorgen said. "But one of the objections in the past has been the cost factor. . . . That decision is above me because it involves a lot of money."

As West pointed out, the cost factor is a legitimate argument. Where would the money come from to fly in crews from different parts of the country? And how would conferences deal with increased travel costs?

Another argument: Would it truly improve the game? If a new system isn't going to make things better, then why change?

"Are you going to have as good or better officiating? Because that is the ultimate test," Slive said. "The question ultimately is what's in the long-term best interest of college football, and can you in fact do it from a central place given every single game that's being played every single Saturday. Just imagine the complexity."

It's that complexity that worries Florida Athletic Director Jeremy Foley.

"I just think to go to a national pool of football officials would be difficult to manage, No. 1," he said. "And No. 2, who deals with those issues? If Urban Meyer has a concern with the officials, who does he call? In college basketball, it's still conference-based. Whether that's the right way to do it, I don't know. . . . The question may sound simple, but it's not."

Home-field advantage?

For the past two seasons, after the controversy in 2003, officials in the UF-FSU game have come from the home team's conference. It will be that way again this season.

"That decision was made as Jeremy and I talked about this perception that's been out there for years and years," FSU AD Dave Hart said. "I've always been an advocate that there's nothing wrong. If you want to take some of that [perception of bias] out of there, let the conference who represents the home school call the game."

Hart said his only concern with the current system is that notion of bias when a team benefits from calls by its conference's officials.

"That perception has always been an element that everyone would certainly like to eliminate," Hart said. "I think it's a shame because I don't think any official takes the field who doesn't have the utmost integrity."

The current system of officiating isn't likely to change soon. In fact, leaders of the sport say it hasn't even been discussed that much.

"The commissioners meet two or three times a year, but the conversation really has not been in-depth up to now," Slive said. "It has been in passing, and we've talked about issues, but I would think we would sit down and have a conversation about that sometime in the spring when we meet."

It's unclear whether those conversations will lead to change. There are some, after all, who don't even want to talk about the issue.

ACC Commissioner John Swofford didn't return phone calls seeking comment. Big 12 spokesman Bob Burda said representatives of his league were unavailable for comment. Dave Parry, the Big Ten's football officiating coordinator and the national officiating coordinator, was told not to share his thoughts by conference spokesman Scott Chipman.

Those who are willing to talk about it believe such discussion might lead to positive change in the sport.

"It's an issue that we all need to discuss," Tribble said. "The real bottom line that we're all trying to do is make sure that the game is officiated the best it possibly can."

"Nobody has the answers yet, but I think it does warrant it for athletic directors and conference commissioners to discuss ways to improve it."

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Posted on Tue, Nov. 28, 2006

MySpace becomes a new frontier for recruiting

By Trae Thompson

McClatchy Newspapers

(MCT)

FORT WORTH, Texas - Tray Allen has heard from the Texas Longhorns, but it hasn't been around town or at games.

It's been on his MySpace page.

"There's not been any coaches, but a lot of fans," said the senior offensive lineman from South Grand Prairie, who has committed to Texas. "People contact me asking stuff like, 'How do you weigh this much? How did you get your footwork?' "

The popular site that allows people to have their own Web pages could be the newest tool in college football recruiting. Recruits and coaches have pages, but problems arise with truthfulness and the inability to monitor contact.

Starting a MySpace page is free and simply requires registration. People then can design their own pages, leave comments on other pages and send e-mails to others.

Some prominent recruits in Texas often hear from fans. Hempstead receiver Terrence Toliver, a member of the Star-Telegram Elite 11, has two comments on his MySpace page urging him to attend Nebraska. Texarkana, Texas, quarterback Ryan Mallett, another Elite 11 member who has committed to Michigan, has numerous comments displayed from Wolverines fans with good wishes, images of T-shirts with his name and requests to have him lure running back Noel Devine of North Fort Myers, Fla., considered one of the nation's best at the position.

"That's amazing," said University of Houston senior quarterback Kevin Kolb, a former player at Stephenville. "Every angle is getting worked, and it's going to continue to escalate."

The NCAA has no specific rules regarding MySpace, but has rules about improper contact between recruits and "representatives of an institution's athletic interests." That led the Kentucky men's basketball team to report secondary rules violations in July after fans contacted a potential recruit on his MySpace page.

"That's the one thing that's the scary part," said Jeremy Crabtree, national recruiting editor for Rivals.com. "No one knows if there's some illegal contact going on. Even though people on MySpace are supposed to be who they are, I guarantee there are 500 pages claiming to be Vince Young. You don't know who anybody is in these things, and it's scary that there could be communication between recruits and guys who are college students, donors or boosters."

Besides recruits, there are MySpace pages for coaches, including Texas Tech's Mike Leach, Ohio State's Jim Tressel and Florida State's Bobby Bowden. The pages have details, such as pirates being among Leach's interests (an actual hobby), and Bowden starting "each day by reading the Bible before breakfast."

Leach, however, said he has nothing to do with his page, nor does Bowden, according to a Nov. 23 article in The Florida Times-Union.

Leach, who first saw his MySpace page six months ago, said he isn't concerned as long as whoever runs the site doesn't do anything abusive or say something he disagrees with. Getting to know a recruit personally is paramount, but Leach didn't rule out MySpace as a recruiting tool.

"The guy down the road might have the ability to BlackBerry, and you have to be able to do that, too," Leach said. "You have to do both hand in hand. You've got to get to know the guy, but that will help."

Many coaches say they know little about MySpace and barely know how to use a computer, but also say they're not surprised that it is used in recruiting. Crabtree said there have been more instances of recruits posting comments on pages of college players

whom they met on official visits, which allows them to continue building a relationship.

"We see that after a school wins a big game, a recruit will post a message on a (college player's) Web site," Crabtree said. "These kids' MySpace pages are up to date, and it's without having to keep track of calls, or worry about losing cellphone numbers. It's just like a social networking vehicle. It would be silly for a coach not to utilize this."

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Posted on Tue, Nov. 28, 2006

Reveal colleges' quality rankings

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

(MCT)

The following editorial appeared in the San Jose Mercury News on Monday, Nov. 27:

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Americans who know every detail about college football rivals would have trouble finding information to assess the quality of education at those universities.

Average yards rushing per game? Sure. Average gain in writing or analytical skills in four years? Five-year graduation rate? Students' access to faculty? Probable cost of a diploma? Don't look for it on the Web site.

It's time for colleges and universities to enter the Information Age, making data on student progress and performance easily available to parents and students. Information on educational value should be a prerequisite to asking families for a hefty tuition. It's clear not everyone is getting a higher education in college.

In a report released in September, U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings' Commission on the Future of Higher Education called for creating a national higher-education database that would help families compare colleges by showing which are the most effective in helping students earn a degree.

That's important to know: Half of students who go to college don't earn a degree in six years. Graduation rates tend to be highest at selective colleges and lowest at colleges that admit students with minimal grades and test scores, but there are significant differences at every level.

In addition, Spellings wants to offer matching funds to colleges that collect and publicize data from the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the National Survey of Student Engagement and other tools to measure students' learning experiences.

A growing number of institutions use these assessments for internal use but shy away from sharing the data publicly. They should make it available.

Regional accrediting bodies also are getting into the act, pushing colleges to show how they measure students' learning.

Tuition rose 51 percent at public four-year institutions and 36 percent at private colleges from 1995 to 2005, the commission found. In the same decade, the percentage of college graduates who can read and understand a complex text declined from 40 to 31, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Other studies find college graduates who have trouble with basic mathematical reasoning.

In a Sept. 26 speech to the National Press Club, Spellings said parents and students need to understand their choices.

``If you want to buy a new car, you go online and compare a full range of models, makes and pricing options," Spellings said. ``And when you're done you'll know everything from how well each car holds its value down to wheel size and number of cup-holders. The same transparency and ease should be the case when students and families shop for colleges, especially when one year of college can cost a lot more than a car."

Spellings will hold a higher education summit in 2007 that will try to build consensus on these issues, as well as other ideas in the commission report.

Despite the fears of higher education leaders, this is not ``No Undergrad Left Behind." There are no proposals to require colleges to use a standard test, no federal schemes to rate or rank colleges. The higher education sector is far too diverse to be judged by any one measure.

But, as college costs soar and young people feel increasing pressure to earn a degree, families need to know more than the average SAT of admitted students or what percentage of applicants were turned away. Knowledge is power.

TWO WAYS TO RANK COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

Here are two tools currently used for evaluating students' college learning experiences:

_The Collegiate Learning Assessment tests incoming freshmen and graduating seniors on skills such as identifying information in documents, analyzing an issue and making a persuasive argument. In a sample question, students are asked to write a memo on whether a company should buy an airplane for executive use after reading about the suggested plane's design, cost and safety issues.

_The National Survey of Student Engagement asks first-year students and seniors about their college experiences, including workload, assignments, interactions with professors, ability to get to know students from different backgrounds, administrative bureaucracy and other issues.

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Title Games Can Be A Burden

Published: Nov 28, 2006

GAINESVILLE - When the two most inspired brainchildren of former Southeastern Conference commissioner **Roy Kramer** find themselves at odds, the baby of the family seems to get his way most of the time.

The football conference championship game - such a cute, cuddly, lucrative toddler in the early and mid-1990s that two of the SEC's sister conferences (Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference) gave birth to cousins - has reached an awkward phase as it approaches its 14th birthday Saturday. Its younger brother, the Bowl Championship Series, tends to upstage it at every turn.

Kramer dreamed up the conference title game in the late '80s. He added South Carolina and Arkansas - which will face Florida in this year's installment - to the SEC to make that dream a reality. The league split into divisions and played its first championship game in 1992, and the game succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Last year, according to figures released by the SEC, the game raked in \$13.2 million for the conference's 12 schools.

Kramer and several others later would concoct the BCS, which debuted in 1998, to bring a semblance of order to the chaos of determining a Division I-A national champion. The six "power conferences" formed a cartel that ensured they kept most of the money and all of the power.

Unfortunately for the SEC and the Big 12 - and later the ACC - Kramer's youngest brainchild gave a competitive edge to the conferences that opted not to stage a championship game. Don't believe it? Only six of the 16 BCS national title game participants have played in a conference title game, and no member of the three championship-game power conferences has a title shot this year.

"The right thing to do is to have every conference have a championship game," Florida coach **Urban Meyer** said Sunday. "Then the winner of that game will go play for a national championship."

A loss to Texas in the 1996 Big 12 title game kept two-time defending national champ Nebraska from trying for a third title against Florida State in the Sugar Bowl. A loss to LSU in the 2001 SEC title game kept Tennessee from facing Miami in the Rose Bowl. Instead, a Nebraska team that didn't even win the Big 12's northern division played for the title.

This season, Ohio State will face either Michigan or USC in the national championship game. None will have to play in a conference title game, though the Pac-10's nine-conference-game schedule did ensure USC played every conference foe.

Coaches love conference title games because they excite fans and players and provide an almost uncontested national television appearance that recruits can't help but notice. Still, they know another chance to play is another chance to lose and derail a national title run.

The SEC, which divided \$116.1 million among its member schools this past year, isn't about to slaughter this particular golden goose on the off chance one team might feast at a national title banquet.

"It has substantial economic value for each of our schools," current SEC commissioner **Mike Slive** said in May at the SEC's spring meetings in Destin.

The Big Ten and Pac-10 remain adamant that they don't want a title game. The Big East is financially stronger with its current eight-team football, 16-team basketball structure than it would be if it added the four programs necessary to stage a football title game - which in turn would force it to break up its cash-cow basketball league.

Florida's Meyer said Sunday that the only fair solution is to make everyone play by the same rules. Then Meyer paused before adding his final, frustrated two cents.

"I don't believe that'll happen, though, for a while," Meyer said.

UF SHORTS

HONOR ROLL: Florida QB **Chris Leak** was named the SEC co-offensive player of the week Monday. Leak threw for 283 yards and two touchdowns Saturday against Florida State.

SOUNDBITE CENTRAL: "Chris is not our kicker. I'll tell you who our kicker is at the end of the week. It may be Chris." - Florida football coach **Urban Meyer** on K **Chris Hetland**, who has made three of 12 field-goal attempts this season.

KEEP AN EYE ON: The Florida volleyball team will open NCAA Tournament play Thursday against Florida A&M in Gainesville.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Should every conference be forced to have a championship game? Vote at TBO.com, keyword: Gators.

November 28, 2006

IOC to consider new events

Skicross probably a go for Vancouver Games, but other sports likely won't get approval

By AP

KUWAIT CITY -- The addition of new events for the Winter Olympics and a partial lifting of a freeze on payments to the International Amateur Boxing Association will be considered by the IOC this week.

Beijing's preparations for the 2008 Summer Olympics and the soaring construction costs for the 2012 London Games also will be reviewed at the two-day meeting of the International Olympic Committee executive board beginning today.

Likely to be approved for inclusion at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver is skicross, a freestyle event similar to snowboard cross, which debuted at the Turin Games 10 months ago and drew good crowds.

Skicross involves groups of skiers racing each other to the bottom of a course featuring jumps, rollers, banks and other manmade and natural terrain features. The competition is part of the International Ski Federation's World Cup freestyle circuit, which also includes the Olympic events of aerials and moguls.

Among other events up for consideration are women's ski jumping, a team event in Alpine skiing, individual curling and team luge. However, the prospects of any of those being approved appear slim.

Ski jumping is the only sport in the Winter Olympics in which women don't participate.

While the IOC is eager to have gender equity in all sports, officials say women's jumping hasn't yet been fully established, noting that the first world championships in the event aren't scheduled until 2009.

Canada's women ski jumpers sent a letter to Vancouver organizers on Nov. 20, urging them to "embrace this opportunity to remove the final barrier to equal participation by women at the Vancouver Olympics."

The Kuwait meeting is the last chance for new events to secure a spot on the Vancouver sports program.

The next opportunity will be for the 2014 Games.

The IOC also will review boxing to see whether it is making the reforms needed to regain its Olympic funding. The IOC froze around \$1 million US in payments to the International Amateur Boxing Association after the 2004 Athens Games, citing concerns over scoring and the selection of judges.

With the 2008 Games less than two years away, Beijing organizers will submit their test progress report to the IOC.

<http://torontosun.com/Sports/OtherSports/2006/11/28/pf-2530698.html>

11/28/2006

While the venues are on schedule, officials are expected to give an indication of their plans for ticket pricing, including making tickets affordable to average Chinese citizens.