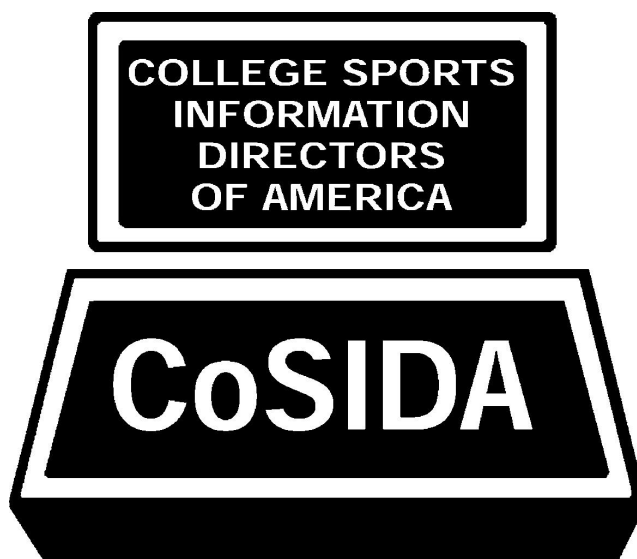


CoSIDA NEWS

Intercollegiate Athletics News and Issues from Around the Nation



OCTOBER 30, 2006

Short Subjects

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i11/11a00601.htm>

From the issue dated November 3, 2006

Football Isn't Everything, Educators Tell Nike

By STU WOO

Picture this scene from a television commercial: It's game day at a high school. The football team's star linebacker is sitting in history class, fighting boredom by folding a paper football, when his teacher walks up to him and asks, "Can anyone tell me what happened to Napoleon when he tried to invade Russia?" Startled, the player throws the teacher a sheepish look.

Cut to next scene: Under the glare of Friday-night lights, the football team converts a last-second Hail Mary pass to score the game-winning touchdown. As players and fans celebrate, a slogan appears on screen: "FOOTBALL IS EVERYTHING."

That message has prompted some university officials to complain to Nike about its "Briscoe High" ad campaign, which made its debut last month at the start of football season and features professional football stars portraying high-school athletes.

The commercial tells children they can focus on sports over education, says Thomas G. Palaima, a classics professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

"The message is, If I just score a touchdown, everything will be all right in my world," he says. The ad "makes a mockery of the values that [educators] hold dear."

After seeing the commercial, Mr. Palaima criticized it in a newspaper column and sent e-mail messages to colleagues and students at Austin, urging them to write letters of complaint to Nike and the advertising agency it hired to produce the commercials. About a dozen people did so, he says.

Around the same time, leaders of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics also drafted a letter about the ads to the shoe giant. The letter complained that the commercial reinforced negative stereotypes about student-athletes, implying that they cared only about sports, says R. Gerald Turner, president of Southern Methodist University and co-chairman of the commission.

Nike received the commission's letter in early September and sent a written response to its members, saying that company officials "regret any misimpression or discomfort the ad may have caused," and that it did not mean to stereotype student-athletes.

"The very inclusion of the classroom setting in the ad was a deliberate acknowledgment that student-athletes must succeed in both arenas — sports and education — in order to have healthy balance and fulfill their potential," the letter says. The letter goes on to suggest that the "Football Is Everything" mantra should apply only "when game time arrives."

Mr. Turner says he was glad Nike responded to the Knight Commission, but he still sees no justification for the company's running the ads and hopes it uses more discretion in future campaigns.

In the meantime, Nadine M. Schulte, an assistant director in Austin's School of Social Work, thought the commercial's reference to Napoleon was apt. "Napoleon's strategy to invade Russia," she wrote in an e-mail message to Nike, "is on par with your strategy to improve the image of sports shoes to the masses — cold and ineffective."

Send ideas to short.subjects@chronicle.com

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Section: Short Subjects

Volume 53, Issue 11, Page A6

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NCAA Football Recruiting

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[Jewish World Review](#) Oct. 24, 2006 / 2 Mar-Cheshvan, 5767

Time to rethink the place of high-stakes football in higher education?

By George Will

<http://www.JewishWorldReview.com> | Before Miami police quelled the recent riot involving more than 100 University of Miami and Florida International University football players in the Orange Bowl, fighting erupted among fans in the stands. In two masterpieces of misdirected anxiety, the commissioner of Miami's Atlantic Coast Conference said the rioting "has no place in college football" and the commissioner of FIU's Sun Belt Conference said "there is no place in higher education for the type of conduct exhibited."



But the question really raised by the barbaric behavior, and by nonviolent but nonetheless lurid behavior by some universities, is: What is the place of high-stakes football in higher education?

Twelve days before the Orange Bowl brawl, Republican Rep. Bill Thomas wrote, as chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, an eight-page letter to the president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, asking awkward questions. Thomas wonders how, or whether, big-time college sports programs, which generate billions of tax-exempt dollars — CBS pays the NCAA an annual average of \$545 million mainly for rights to televise the March Madness basketball tournament — further the purposes for which educational institutions are granted tax-exempt status. Other questions include:

How does the NCAA fulfill its proclaimed purpose of maintaining "the athlete as an integral part of the student body"? Only 55 percent of football players and 38 percent of basketball players at Division I-A schools graduate. The New York Times has reported that at Auburn, a perennial football power, many athletes have received "high grades from the same professor for sociology and criminology courses that required no attendance and little work." Eighteen members of the undefeated 2004 team took a combined 97 hours of those courses while at Auburn. Who believes such behavior is confined to Auburn?

In recent decades the NCAA has increased the number of games that football and men's basketball teams are allowed to play. Thomas wonders how these changes help athletes improve their academic

FREE

performances? Perhaps these changes have pecuniary purposes?

The NCAA aims to "retain a clear line of demarcation between intercollegiate athletics and professional sports." But aside from not compensating the athletes in a way commensurate with the money they generate for the universities, how is that line clear?

Some say the tax-exempt status of college sports is justified by the fact — and it is a fact — that successful sports teams often trigger increased applications for admission, and largess from alumni and legislatures. But, Thomas notes, "federal taxpayers have no interest in increasing applicant pools at one school opposed to another." Furthermore, athletic success that causes a surge of giving to universities may decrease giving to worthy charities.

Also, tax exemption is financing an escalation of coaches' salaries. More than 35 college football coaches are paid more than \$1 million annually. The University of Colorado athletic department has borrowed \$8 million, much of which will be used to buy out the contract of a fired football coach. Noting that several universities pay their men's basketball coaches four to five times more than their women's basketball coaches, Thomas wonders: "What additional educational benefit do men's basketball coaches provide beyond that which is provided by women's basketball coaches?" If the disparity has a commercial rather than an educational rationale, why should the commerce be tax-free?

Tax exemption also is a federal subsidy for ever-more lavish facilities: Oklahoma State University, which is receiving \$165 million from T. Boone Pickens to improve its athletic facilities, was already planning a \$102 million upgrade of its football stadium. OSU charges fans a \$2,500 "annual donation" just to become eligible to buy tickets for the best seats. The University of Michigan, which has had 198 consecutive sellouts at its stadium that now seats 107,501, is spending \$226 million to add 3,200 luxury seats and 83 suites. The University of Texas at Austin is spending \$150 million to add 10,000 seats to its current 85,123 capacity. These may be sound commercial decisions, but why should this commerce be tax-exempt?

Thomas wants to know how many NCAA members "generate a net profit on the operations of their athletic departments (excluding university subsidies such as student fees or general school funds and services)? Of the institutions that generate a net profit, how many use the profit for purposes unrelated to the athletic department?"

Thomas is retiring, but if Democrats capture control of the House, the new chairman of Ways and Means, Charles Rangel, may hold hearings into the NCAA's tax-free lifestyle. Such hearings will be embarrassing, if people who operate football and basketball factories are capable of embarrassment.

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October 29, 2006

NCAA'S TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

Organization turns to lobbyists for help

By Mark Alesia

mark.alesia@indystar.com

October 29, 2006

During the NCAA men's basketball tournament last March, the organization tried some moves of its own, setting aside selected late-round tickets for Washington lawmakers and congressional staff members.

"We do offer tickets to certain folks at our discretion, usually officials who have an interest in the games," an NCAA spokesman told the Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call, adding that the tickets must be bought at full price and the number of people involved was "very small."

While that's hardly the stuff of extravagant junkets, it's clear the Indianapolis-based NCAA is not unfamiliar with the ways of Washington. It has two full-time lobbyists working in the nation's capitol in an office it established in 1995.

In the coming weeks, if not months, that could be important as the NCAA faces pointed questions from a congressman about the education-based tax exemption enjoyed by college sports.

NCAA president Myles Brand has a Nov. 13 deadline to provide written answers to seven pages of questions from Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., chair of the House Ways and Means Committee.

It's an issue whose scope has gone beyond the usual observers of the NCAA and gotten the attention of, among others, syndicated columnist George Will and The Wall Street Journal.

Thomas' questions cut to the core of the NCAA's proclaimed purpose: keeping sports, including highly commercialized events such as the Final Four, as an integral part of higher education. The connection to education is the reason the NCAA, conferences and individual programs don't pay taxes.

After the NCAA answers the questions, congressional hearings could follow.

"Such hearings will be embarrassing, if people who operate football and basketball factories are capable of embarrassment," Will wrote.

Wrote The Wall Street Journal: "For the average reader the letter contains some bombshells that could make it difficult to have much sympathy for the NCAA and its member schools during their current ordeal under the congressional microscope."

Among the letter's questions:

"From the standpoint of a Federal taxpayer, why should the Federal government subsidize the athletic activities of educational institutions when that subsidy is being used to help pay for escalating coaches' salaries, costly chartered travel, and state-of-the-art athletic facilities?"

"Does the NCAA collect information from its member institutions to determine whether athletes are disproportionately taking certain professors, courses, or academic majors at individual schools?"

"Several Division I-A schools pay their men's basketball coaches four to five times more than their women's basketball coaches. What additional educational benefit do men's basketball coaches provide beyond that which is provided by women's basketball

coaches?"

The NCAA's highest committee, composed of school presidents, had a regularly scheduled meeting last week in Indianapolis. A spokesman declined a request to speak with committee members but said they were updated on the process the NCAA is using to answer the questions. The spokesman also said committee members had a discussion of "how intercollegiate athletics is fully integrated in the academic process at our institutions."

In the NCAA News, which the organization publishes, a recent story stressed that 95 percent of the NCAA's money is returned to schools.

"In the last three months, we've conducted a review of procedures to ensure that we are adhering to the purpose of our tax-exempt status," Jim Isch, the NCAA's chief financial officer, is quoted as saying. "We're doing everything in accordance with the law."

Thomas' questions, however, go beyond the NCAA to how schools operate their athletic programs.

Thomas is retiring when his term expires in January. Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, chair of the Finance Committee, which oversees tax issues, has asked the NCAA to send him a copy of its response to Thomas' questions.

The New York Post reported that if the Democrats win the House in next month's elections, the new Ways and Means chair, Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., would continue scrutiny of the NCAA.

According to a Web site run by the Center for Public Integrity, the NCAA has two registered lobbyists in Washington, Abe Frank and Edgar Burch.

The NCAA spent \$160,000 lobbying in 2004-05, according to its most recent filing with the federal government. Since 2001, it has spent \$442,000 on lobbying.

Gambling, player agents and performance-enhancing drugs have been major issues in the past for the NCAA in Washington.

October 29, 2006

THE SHOW

Up Close and (Very) Personal

By BRYAN CURTIS

I mean no disrespect to my fellow college football fans when I say that we might be the closest thing America has to European soccer nuts. Not in the blood and mayhem departments — unless, of course, you’ve been to a postgame party in Columbus, Ohio. No, we college fans most resemble our overzealous European cousins in our quest for information. First, we demand obscurities, like the status of a backup strong safety’s injured hamstring. Second, we demand that information be reported to us from a sympathetic point of view. So outside are our passions for [the Sooners](#), the Trojans and the Crimson Tide that neutrality, in the general sportswriterly sense, just won’t do. We want journalists — and here I use the term very loosely — who know the words to the alma mater.

[Orangebloods.com](#), a part of the [Rivals.com](#) network, could fairly be described as my favorite Web site. It is devoted to the Longhorns of the [University of Texas](#), where I went to school. I surf its news articles and message boards daily — and, along with 7,000 other Longhorns fans, pay \$9.95 a month (or \$99.95 per year) for the privilege. This “living, breathing thing,” in the words of Bobby Burton, the editor in chief of Rivals, rocks with the passions of a digital fraternity house. The loves are great; the hates are greater. And when the conversation veers away from sports, you can see subscribers turning to the tender questions of undergraduate life. As one message board denizen asked this summer, “Do you feel comfortable receiving a massage from another man?”

Rivals has a similar site for every major college: [Warchant.com](#) for [Florida State](#), [IrishIllustrated.com](#) for [Notre Dame](#) and

so forth. [Scout.com](#), a competitor, offers a similarly comprehensive service, and there are dozens of unaffiliated message boards as well. What has emerged from these swamps of fandom, from message boards frequented by pseudonymous posters like “Longhorn Babe” and “Hornius Emeritus,” is — don’t laugh — an essential journalistic resource. For people who fancy themselves serious fans of the college game, it’s safe to say that these sites have, in some cases, replaced the traditional media. We go to the Web seeking more news, better gossip and more passionate opinion. What we find there is often even true.

Ever since Grantland Rice immortalized Notre Dame’s Four Horsemen in deadline metaphor, college football writers have had a penchant for swooning. But outside of a few great local papers, they never

combined the cheerleading with an intensive study of a particular team. It wasn't until the late 1970's that the national coverage began to get satisfyingly micro. First came the recruiting "gurus," the men who inspired Bobby Burton. In his early career, Burton put together comprehensive studies of high school seniors, compiling his findings in a print newsletter that drew about 5,000 subscribers. The Internet changed the game. Burton and others realized that it offered unlimited space for minutiae — heights, weights and 40-yard-dash times — as well as a chance to tailor that information to every fan base. Finally, college football writing would be directly linked with rabid fandom. It was on this principle that Jim Heckman, a Seattle-based entrepreneur, founded Rivals in 1998.

Burton and two partners acquired the network in 2001, after it had gone bankrupt. (Heckman went on to build up Scout.com, which he later sold for a reported \$60 million.) With a site for nearly every Division 1-A school (and a handful for 1-AA powers), Rivals now claims more than 160,000 subscribers. There are strains of Granny Rice's giddy poetry in Rivals' journalism, because Burton's sportswriters can only halfheartedly be described as objective reporters. Burton found some of his digital proprietors on the Web, after they already erected shrines to their favorite teams; others he recruited from the traditional media. What has emerged is something beyond even what you'd find in the most boosterish local columnist: a new Internet species — half dogged reporter, half deliriously over-the-top fan.

Orangebloods is presided over by Geoff Ketchum, a former Austin television reporter and producer. Ketchum is what we could safely call a Texas homer, the kind who would take every available swipe at rivals [Texas A&M](#) and Oklahoma. Orangebloods consists of articles posted daily by Ketchum and his writers, as well as message boards full of subscribers who supply opinion and their own amateur muckraking. When the mix works, you can almost justify those windy platitudes about citizen journalism. This September, two Texas players were arrested on drug and weapons charges. Within hours, Orangebloods subscribers had posted the arrest affidavits on the message boards. Reporting from the press conference of the Longhorns' head coach, Mack Brown, Ketchum contributed the news that Brown had suspended the players from the pivotal contest against [Ohio State](#). Later that week, a poster claiming intimate knowledge of the situation contended that one of the players had merely been an innocent bystander. "People can either accept the veracity of this post or can choose to discard it," he wrote. Indeed, the drug charges were soon dropped, and the players were reinstated the following week.

Orangebloods readers may be Texas fans, but they maintain a deep suspicion of the Longhorns' program. They know college football powers are reluctant to share news about poor grades, bad behavior and, especially, injuries. John Bianco, a sports information director at Texas, says that Longhorns players have gone off to class with ice packs on their knees — and then, within hours, an "injury report" surfaces on the message boards, usually posted by a fellow student. (More often than not, the player was just sore.) Such phony reports have made the skeptical among us strangely suspicious. This summer, the University of Oklahoma quarterback Rhett Bomar was kicked off the

team for accepting improper payments from a car dealership. As [SI.com](#)'s Stewart Mandel reported, Bomar's indiscretions had been revealed six months earlier on a message board on [TexAgs.com](#) (a Texas A&M fan site not in the Rivals.com network). The poster had been flamed, the Aggie faithful believing that the story was so good it couldn't possibly be true.

There's another spirit animating sites like Orangebloods: the sense that our mood swings really matter. Though they are loath to admit it, college programs are sensitive to the howls of their fans, and the only real way to measure them is the Internet. An early example was [FireRonZook.com](#), a site dedicated to the ouster of the [University of Florida](#) coach in 2002. The site — and the fact that print reporters covered it incessantly — started the clamor that led to Zook's sacking. Even allowing for the grandiosity of the Internet, and for the fact that bile plays better there, you need to poke around only for a few minutes on a Rivals site to get a sense of a fan base's mood. Indeed, Texas's Bianco has assistants keeping an eye on the message boards.

Actual college football is not the most important thing on Rivals.com. That would be recruiting. For the uninitiated: every year the college football powers woo a fresh supply of 17- and 18-year-olds, and the college fans eye them like raw meat. "It's a level of fantasy sports," says Bruce Feldman, a writer with ESPN magazine who's working on a book about recruiting. "They fall in love with these kids, even though they've only seen a 20-second clip the size of a postage stamp." In addition to video clips, Rivals readers may scrutinize a high school prospect's height, weight, 40-yard-dash time and — I am not making this up — grade-point average and SAT score. With the Rivals dossier in hand, the fan then tracks the recruits until "Signing Day," in early February, the first day the recruit can bind himself to his chosen school. According to Burton, on Signing Day this year, Rivals attracted some 57 million page views.

Until I started following recruiting on Rivals, I thought Dan Jenkins had taken great comic liberties in his football novels. In fact, the stuff you read on Rivals is far stranger than anything Jenkins has dared to write. Rivals correspondents from the various schools call prospects every few days to "check in." The kids, being 17 years old and sought after by famous college football coaches they do not wish to offend, issue bland pronouncements like "I want to make a decision soon, but I'm not ready to make one yet." Still other recruits learn to brilliantly play one site off another, swearing allegiance to, say, Oregon when the Ducks' editor calls, then doing the same to the Washington Huskies' reporter.

Recruiting remains one of the outlaw zones of covering college sports. Rivals writers walk a thin line between reporting the player's intentions, in their capacity as journalists, and recruiting the players, in their capacity as fans. If the old fear was that players were besieged by coaches offering favors, the new fear might be that they are besieged by Internet "reporters," each of whom is selling his or her school. As Bianco points out, there are dead periods when coaches are prohibited from calling recruits, but a Rivals writer can call anytime. In effect, he becomes the school's intermediary.

Writers must sign a code of ethics mandating that they won't try to sway recruits. Even so, it could be easy to bend the rules. An Oklahoma writer could ask a quarterback prospect leading questions like "Are you concerned that Texas already has three young quarterbacks on the roster?" In September, The Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C., reported that Cris Ard, who runs Rivals' [Clemson University](#) site, met the [N.C.A.A.](#)'s designation of a booster. (Ard had ended his financial relationship with the school, but the N.C.A.A. makes no distinction between current and former boosters.) Clemson investigated Ard and cleared him of any wrongdoing. But while Ard might not have violated the spirit of the rules — he's not actually recruiting for Clemson — he is doing what every Rivals journalist does, which is trying to boost the team with his Web site.

My bet is that recruits are smart enough to know when they're being led around by the nose and that, in the end, calls from all the Rivals sites will cancel out any undue influence. For readers, Rivals and its counterparts mean a different trade-off: more news but with less pretense of objectivity. It's a trade-off that we fans are increasingly willing to make. In my case, perhaps it's because I feel connected to the Longhorns in a way that I don't to any professional team. Or perhaps it's because we Orangebloods have descended so deep into the bunker that we hardly notice we aren't reading, say, the sports pages of USA Today or The New York Times. On Orangebloods, the conversation rages 24 hours a day and puts an outlandish amount of importance on things that happen within a five-mile radius of campus. In other words, it's a lot like being in college.

Curtis is a staff writer at Slate.

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October 24, 2006

At the N.F.L.'s Nerve Center, All Eyes Are on the Officials

By [JUDY BATTISTA](#)

The first half of the game between the [Dolphins](#) and the [Packers](#) on Sunday in Miami came to an end with Green Bay kicking a field goal. But there was a flag on the play. One of the Packers had committed a face-mask penalty, and the referee announced that the violation meant a 10-second runoff of the clock. The half was over, and the Packers did not have their 3 points after all.

Within seconds, the phone rang at the National Football League's officiating office in Midtown Manhattan. Someone from Fox Sports needed an explanation, so the announcers could share it with viewers. Mike Pereira, the N.F.L.'s vice president for officiating, picked up a rulebook and started reading, "Rule 4, Section 3, Article 11C." Then he hung up.

"I love it when we're right," Pereira shouted, punching his fist in the air. Immediately, his cellphone rang, with someone else seeking the same information.

The N.F.L.'s headquarters on Park Avenue look like any other well-appointed corporate workplace, full of spotless glass and gleaming wood. Not this room, though.

Pereira spends game days in the league's officiating control center, a darkened room with flickering images of games on 10 high-definition televisions and a floor-to-ceiling projection screen. It appears as if a sports bar has been dropped into an office building, except this pub features only people who know exactly what they are talking about, and Commissioner Roger Goodell drops in with his twin daughters.

For a fan, this would be nirvana. For the N.F.L., the control room is a boisterous nerve center that serves as a vital link between the big business of pro football and the credibility of the games.

The N.F.L. has never faced as much criticism for its officiating as it did during the playoffs last season. Remember the interception by [Steelers](#) safety Troy Polamalu that was wrongly overturned? But no irate coach or fuming sports-talk host scrutinizes officials more intensely than the league officials here.

The control room is located past a "Zebra X-ing" sign and not far from Pereira's corner office, which is decorated almost exclusively with black and white stripes and includes a marionette of an official. In the control room, each game is watched by someone listening on headphones and taking copious

notes concerning all player-discipline penalties and all instant-replay challenges.

Games are digitally recorded so that every fumble, every injury, every step out of bounds can be reviewed in excruciatingly slow motion.

When something important happens, the person monitoring that game shouts out and has the play displayed on the big screen. That is why Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, face down on the field in Atlanta, appeared bigger than life for several minutes Sunday.

"Where is the helmet? I want to see the helmet," Pereira said as he watched a frame-by-frame replay of the hit, which appeared to come from a defender's shoulder as Roethlisberger ducked.

Within a minute, the phone rang, this time with a call from Atlanta, where Roethlisberger was still on the ground. Officiating observers, who are former officials, attend each game, and they check in periodically. "I think the hit's O.K.," Pereira said on the phone.

Pereira has operated out of this room on game days for five seasons, allowing him to view and respond rapidly to potential controversies. He used to be on the road each Sunday and would not see all of the game tapes until midday Monday. But that was too slow for Pereira, a man who receives calls or e-mail reports from 16 to 18 coaches on Mondays and fields questions from reporters.

In the control room, the light is blocked out by heavy shades to keep glare off the screens. Food is ordered — to go along with the chocolate chip cookies the commissioner's wife baked on this day — and Pereira issues instructions.

"Remember, no surprises," he told the people who would be watching games. Later, he added, "My goal is no surprises for upstairs and no surprises for me."

Upstairs refers to Goodell. On Monday mornings, Pereira provides Goodell with a tape of critical or questionable plays. The last thing he wants is an annoyed owner calling in about a play that Goodell has not yet heard about.

On a particularly interesting or troublesome play, Pereira will shout "commissioner's tape." That means it will be on the compilation of five or six plays being prepared for Goodell.

The freewheeling atmosphere makes the room a magnet for league employees who stop by during the day. There are also occasional reminders that as intently as the action is tracked, these are still games that everyone might otherwise be watching from their sofas.

The room erupted when Matt Bryant kicked a 62-yard field goal to lift [Tampa Bay](#) to a 23-21 victory over Philadelphia. And late in the [Redskins'](#) lopsided loss to the [Colts](#), Jay Manahan, the officiating department's manager of statistical analysis, wondered aloud what plenty of people in real sports bars

must have been thinking about Washington's quarterback: "Why is Brunell still in this game?"

To encourage everyone to pay close attention, Pereira awards points to the monitors watching the game that kicks off first, the game that has the first fourth-down conversion and the game that has a quarter with no penalties. Almost nothing escapes attention.

Someone noticed that the [Raiders](#) were three minutes late kicking off, necessitating a phone call for an explanation. When Colts quarterback [Peyton Manning](#) spiked the ball from the shotgun formation on third down, Manahan noted it on his log. Although nobody had seen it committed before, a spike from the shotgun formation is an obscure infraction. No penalty was called.

Pereira is acutely aware of the pressure officials face, and he parses his words when commenting on decisions at games.

When officials during [the Jets-Lions](#) game announced a penalty incorrectly, then huddled before correcting themselves, Pereira delivered a stream-of-consciousness analysis. "What did we just do?" he said. "Sloppy, but we got it right in the end."

When Manning was hit, bent backward and had his helmet popped off during the Colts game, no penalty was called. "My opinion is we could have called unnecessary roughness," Pereira said.

As the games ended, Pereira typed information into his computer: the average game time, the number of penalties called and the number accepted. Then he worked on the tape for Goodell; it included the hits that injured Roethlisberger and Seattle quarterback Matt Hasselbeck, and the play that resulted in the 10-second-runoff against Green Bay.

Each Monday, the officiating observers return to the office from games and watch the tapes, looking at camera angles showing all 22 players on the field and a perspective from the end zone.

The view from the end zone is what Pereira wanted to see of the hits on Roethlisberger and Hasselbeck. He would watch over and over as Minnesota's E. J. Henderson rolled low into Hasselbeck's right knee. The end-zone view would show whether Henderson was blocked into Hasselbeck or if there was enough separation from the blocker for Henderson to stop himself.

Later in the week, Pereira and the supervisors grade the officiating crews and break down the tapes by each officiating position. Only then is the analysis complete.

As Hasselbeck lay on the ground Sunday, one announcer speculated whether the hit would result in punishment from the league. "You don't know what their interpretation will be," he said.

"They're talking about us," Pereira replied to the television. As they always are.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Coaches pump up conferences' toughness

By Sam Ross Jr.
TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Friday, October 27, 2006

The Bowl Championship Series title game decides who's No. 1 in Division I-A football, although not to the satisfaction of all. Even more contentious is the question of which conference is the best.

Earlier this season, when the Southeastern Conference had six Top-25 teams, Sports Illustrated pronounced that conference the best, saying it was unlikely that any of the teams would make the BCS championship game because of that cumulative strength.

In early October, Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville, whose team was unbeaten and No. 2 in the AP poll at the time, lobbied hard for a national playoff.

"I've about had it with this playoff deal. We all understand in our conference how tough it is," he said. "In our conference, that's about the only chance we'd have to make it (to the BCS title game)."

Auburn lost its next game, 27-10, to Arkansas.

Two weeks into the BCS ratings season, the Big Ten can claim not only the No. 1 team, Ohio State, but also No. 2, Michigan. The Big Ten also has Wisconsin at No. 18.

Ohio State coach Jim Tressel, speaking at his weekly press conference, was unaware Michigan had moved up to second.

"Well, I didn't really study it that close. From where?" he asked.

From third, he was told.

"From three? The Big Ten should be on top," he said.

Tressel, whose team will be playing for high stakes in a Nov. 18 season finale with Michigan, beat the drum for his conference in the Big Ten teleconference later in the week.

"The Big Ten is a tough sled to get through," he said. "If you blink one time in the Big Ten, you're going to be terribly disappointed."

The Big East, which also has two teams in the BCS top 10, No. 4 West Virginia and No. 8 Louisville, has its showdown game a little earlier, Thursday at Louisville.

"It should get the attention of the entire country," West Virginia coach Rich Rodriguez said. "Good for the league, too.

"It's going to be a great showcase for the Big East and certainly for our program."

The Pac-10, with Southern California No. 3 in the BCS standings and California No. 10, and the SEC, with Auburn No. 5 and Florida No. 6, are the other two conferences with two top-10 teams this week.

Measuring conference strength is so tricky, Jeff Sagarin lists two methods on his Web site.

In straight arithmetic rankings, he ranks the Pac-10 first, followed by the SEC, Big 10, Big East, Big 12 and ACC.

In rankings weighted more heavily to middle-of-the-pack teams, his conference rankings are, in order, Pac-10, SEC, Big East, Big 10, ACC and Big 12.

Sic 'em

Tennessee mascot Smokey IX put the bite on Alabama freshman wide receiver Mike McCoy during pregame warmups.

According to the dog's handler, Smokey was posing for pictures with cheerleaders out of bounds when McCoy chased down a long pass and stepped on the dog, who then lunged at the player.

There is debate over whether Smoke got skin or just pants, but the Volunteers won the game, 16-13.

Grounded

Not only did Oregon suffer a 34-23 upset at Washington State, but the Ducks also spent six hours delayed at the airport in Lewiston, Idaho. Their charter flight, scheduled for an 8 p.m. departure, went wide on a turn prior to takeoff and got stuck in the mud. A tow bar for the 757 had to be brought in from Spokane, Wash., 110 miles away.

The flight eventually left at 2 a.m., and most of the players didn't get home until 4.

The Ducks were playing at Washington State for a third consecutive season because of quirky Pac-10 scheduling.

Must be the pants

Paul Hornung unintentionally dropped his pants and revealed blue boxers at a Notre Dame pep rally. The former Heisman Trophy winner explained that he'd recently lost considerable weight and his pants no longer fit well. Perhaps inspired, Notre Dame used a late 80-yard drive to rally for a 20-17 win over UCLA.

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A chair of authority

Matthews' son sets example in coaching job

BY JOHN O'CONNOR

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

JAMES MADISON AT RICHMOND
SATURDAY: 3 P.M.
RADIO: WXGI (950), WREJ (1540), 2:30

Rather than being watched in after-school care when he was 6, Clayton Matthews watched his father, a football coach at practice. This went on for years as Mickey Matthews moved from job to job. Still, Clayton Matthews never presumed he would follow his dad's professional lead.

While on that subject yesterday, Clayton Matthews recalled the story of an architect and his son. The son grew up hearing his father talk about work, seeing his father work. The son always figured he would enter some other business.

"All of a sudden, you look up and [the son] is building buildings," Clayton Matthews said. "That's kind of how it was with me."

At James Madison University, where Mickey Matthews has been the head coach since 1999, Clayton Matthews is in his first season as assistant. The 24-year-old son has no idea if he could coach three decades, as his father has.

"With what's happened to me the last couple of years, I really don't look at anything long-term," Clayton Matthews said.

On Aug. 3, 2003, Clayton Matthews was the driver of a car that ran off a Harrisonburg road and through trees. In addition to several broken bones in other parts of his body, Matthews suffered fractured vertebrae. He was paralyzed below chest-level.

A subsequent automobile accident in which Matthews was not the driver, this one following a doctor's visit in Charlottesville, rebroke his neck in April of 2004. Rehabilitation took Matthews to Atlanta and Houston. He received his JMU degree earlier this year then officially joined the Dukes staff.

"I'm as healthy as I can get, considering the situation," Matthews said. "I don't have a disease, or anything like that. I just broke my neck."

He maneuvers around campus in a motorized wheelchair. He works the same 6 a.m.-9 p.m. shifts as other college coaches. He has been on a handful of recruiting missions, with JMU colleagues. He drives his own car. He is preparing to move into his own townhouse. As for the Dukes, "they see him as a football coach. They don't see him as a football coach in a wheelchair," said Pete Johnson, a JMU equipment manager for a decade.

Johnson has been at Madison long enough to have known Matthews as a Dukes quarterback, kicker and wide receiver. He hated to lose then, and paralysis didn't change that. When his receivers repeat a



JOE

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James Madison assistant coach Clayton Matthews, according to equipment manager Pete Johnson, is viewed by the Dukes as a "football coach. They don't him see him as a football coach in a wheelchair." JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

mistake, Matthews responds promptly and loudly.

"He is Coach Matthews' son, so he has it in him," said L.C. Baker, a JMU wideout.

Matthews praises his receivers and kickers for their attention and support. He realizes that he cannot be the coach who demonstrates proper plant-foot position, the coach who throws passes, the coach who hugs after TDs. Matthews compares his teaching technique to communicating with his players via telephone and emphasizes the specificity required when offering direction.

In one sense, direction may not be needed. Think a glimpse of a wheelchair-bound 24-year-old might sharpen players' focus?

"I don't know about being a role model, or an inspiration, or anything like that," Matthews said. "But I think I am a really good example that when a lot of stuff goes wrong, you can still get something good out of it."

Contact staff writer John O'Connor at joconnor@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6233.

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Views differ on notion of football playoff

By **[Stu Durando](#)**

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Friday, Oct. 27 2006

The Big Ten is represented by the top two teams in the latest Bowl Championship Series standings, but only one will have a chance to play for the national title.

Ohio State is No. 1 and Michigan is No. 2, but, barring an upset in coming weeks, the winner of their showdown Nov. 18 probably will earn a spot in the BCS championship game, while the other is invited elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the coaches have differing views on the concept of a playoff for college football.

"With the 12-game season, which is a reality for the good of the whole, having a full-fledged playoff would be too much to ask of student-athletes," Ohio State coach Jim Tressel said. "I think we have the best system. If someone ends up disputing who is champion, fine. That's been going on for years and years, and I don't think we're any worse for it."

Michigan coach Lloyd Carr developed a different view with the arrival of the 12-game schedule, and not just because his team could be bumped from contention with a loss in Columbus.

"I think we can improve college football," he said. "I've never supported a playoff until a year ago when they passed legislation to go to the 12th game. That for me was the tipping point. ... I simply think that we could do it by giving others an opportunity."

Charged-up Spartans

Michigan State had suffered four consecutive losses and trailed Northwestern 24-3 at halftime, yet coach John L. Smith said the team was upbeat at intermission. The same was true after falling behind 38-3 in the third quarter.

"There was a great electricity in the locker room, and it carried to the sideline," Smith said. "Everybody tried to generate a little bit, and they challenged each other to play the way that we could."

The result was the biggest comeback in the history of Division I-A football, as the Spartans rallied for a 41-38 win.

Holding a grudge

Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz grew up in Pittsburgh, and as a Pirates fan he's still bothered by a move the organization didn't make in the offseason after Lloyd McClendon was fired as manager.

"I'm mad at the Pirates because they didn't hire Jim Leyland when he was out there," Ferentz said. "That was an awful move. The Tigers want to win more than the Pirates maybe. I'm not looking to be welcomed back in Pittsburgh, I guess."

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Published: October 27, 2006

Public enemy No. 1

ESPN's Lee Corso is one of the more polarizing figures covering college football, but the former coach knows his craft and he has a few misconceptions to clear up about his criticism of USC

By Bob Gillespie

The State

Lee Corso is a marked man this weekend. He knows this, of course.

Corso, the flamboyant college football analyst and primary lightning rod for ESPN's "GameDay" pregame show when South Carolina entertains Tennessee on Saturday night (7:45 p.m.), would know what awaits if he bothered to check USC message boards, all of them dripping bile this week.

One post says Corso "loved Lou (Holtz, the Gamecocks' former coach) when he was here and is out to get us for getting rid of him." Others say Corso has never picked USC to win a game (not true, he says; more on that later).

Most, though, are more along the lines of this: "This is for Lee Corso's comments ... at the beginning of the (2005) season against (Central Florida): 'Kiss my (expletive).'"

But then, as Corso says, "I don't look at e-mail. I don't read nothing."

He knows what is coming because "I've probably (ticked) off every school in America at least once. Tell (USC fans) to join the bandwagon. It's loaded."

And what did Corso say to inspire such antipathy?

Corso said Steve Spurrier can't win at USC.

He did say that, right?

Not so fast, my friend.

The following is from Corso in August 2005: "If anybody can turn that program into a championship program, it's Steve Spurrier. He knows how, he has the system and the personality to take South Carolina to the next level. ... If anyone can put South Carolina in the battle for the SEC East every year, it's Spurrier."

Huh?

"Thank you," Corso said.

Are you saying, sir, that you have been (gasp!) taken out of context?

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "There was a sign one time at Auburn: 'Remember when you picked Fresno State to beat us?' Yeah, I remember: Auburn won, 62-0. They never forget."

In fact, Corso did say all of the above before Spurrier's Thursday night debut in 2005, a game covered by ESPN. Alas, he followed that with this: "... but I don't think he will."

Six little words and you're damned for life by Gamecock Nation — if not by its leader.

"(Corso) didn't say we couldn't have winning seasons (and) go to bowls," Spurrier said. "He just stated he didn't think we could win a championship here.

"That's just his opinion. He's probably not the only one to say that, but he gets to say it on national TV all the time."

And so Spurrier is happy to let Corso be USC's bad guy. "He's given us sort of inspiration to prove him wrong," the coach said.

Fred Bennett, the Gamecocks' star cornerback, fired a salvo in Corso's direction this week. Even Spurrier, asked about Corso's pick of Vanderbilt to beat USC last week, said: "He picked Kentucky, too, I heard. He picks against us every week because he has to live with what he said."

We pause for another truth-in-advertising moment. "I didn't pick Kentucky," Corso said, laughing. "Tell Steve to get his facts straight."

As hard as it may be to believe, these guys actually like each other.

"He and (Kirk) Herbstreit and those guys do a good job," Spurrier said. "They're not critical of coaches, which I don't understand ... how some broadcasters who never coached a lick, all of a sudden they're experts on how to coach."

Corso did coach (at Indiana and in the USFL) and says that "I promised myself when I got in this business, when I said (an opinion), I'd back it up with facts.

"I might be wrong, but I've done a lot of research when I say something. Heck, there ain't many still living in college football that have done it 53 years" as a player, coach and TV personality.

All that convinces him, among SEC coaches, Spurrier is on a par with Bear Bryant. He also calls USC defensive coordinator Tyrone Nix "one of the best in the country. You combine him with Spurrier on offense, that's dynamite."

Corso's admiration led to a conversation while he was attending a funeral in Bloomington, Ind., years ago. The brother of one of Corso's former players approached him about his son, then a quarterback at Bloomington South High.

"He asked, 'Where would you send him?'" Corso said. "I said, 'I'd send him to Florida, to the best quarterbacks coach in college football.' "

That player's name? Rex Grossman.

Come to think of it, that's another reason for USC fans to hate Corso.

Not that he cares. He revels in fans' reactions. "We're in the entertainment business, and I used college football as my vehicle," Corso said. "I can talk about 'cover two' and dropping the free safety, but (fans) don't want to hear that."

Instead, USC fans would rather prepare their taunts and their inflammatory signs (those that get past ESPN's "sign patrol") for Corso's arrival. And just in case they needed any more incentive ...

"It's going to be a great show," he said, "(but) Clemson (last Saturday) had the best environment for GameDay ever, the best in 13 years. The best-behaved, most knowledgeable fans we ever had. Clemson was wonderful!"

You can hear the message boards firing up now.

Reach senior writer Bob Gillespie at (803) 771-8304.

A typical ESPN College GameDay" work week

SUNDAY: Select location

At a late-night, round-table discussion, "College GameDay" producers lock themselves in a room and review the weekend's results. Considerations is immediately given to the Top 25 rankings. Some weeks it is an obvious choice: maybe a big rivalry, or No. 1 vs. No. 2. The challenge lies in the surprises. Producers do not come out of the room until they have a great choice for that week's marquee matchup.

MONDAY: Secure lodging, research features, meet university officials

This round-table meeting does not compare to the intensity of the one the night before, but it is every bit as important. It starts at 9 a.m. with a two-hour brainstorm session to determine feature angles for the week. Often it is a Heisman report. Other times it is tracking down a high school coach or other sources of inspiration.

TUESDAY: Scout location, prep area for set construction, hurry up and wait

Tuesday is penciled in as an off day. People work from home, wait for the phone to ring, check e-mail and teleconference from wherever to get it done. Tuesday morning is also when the first call is made to a host school's sports information director. A discussion here lets GameDay know what to expect in terms of the site, the expected size of the crowd and raises flags for quality control as

planning progresses. There is checking in with the school, following up on hotel accommodations and laying the groundwork for success.

WEDNESDAY: Lock in live interviews, obtain mascot heads for Corso

While Wednesday sees five big rigs and two production compounds dig in on campus to unload and build the set, the heads of production begin to focus on the weeks ahead. Shooting begins and a follow-up call is made to the sports information director to secure the mascot heads for Lee Corso's big pick to close the show. For that, security and discretion are of utmost importance.

THURSDAY: Plan security for features case arrival

A lot of the highlight footage used for our features each week is flown in from ESPN studios in Bristol, Conn. Once referred to as the Ark of the Covenant, these edited reels are packed in a case and followed by security from the airport to campus for safe delivery. Simultaneously, set construction nears completion as host Chris Fowler and analyst Kirk Herbstreit prepare for the Thursday night game.

FRIDAY: Pre-production, pre-show, A.M. dismissal

Much of the week's work has to wait until the end of the week. Friday is the longest day. While Herbstreit and Fowler are on their way to the "GameDay" site, Corso prepares for Saturday morning. Researchers and fact checkers are hard at work. Producers are on-site to ensure all pieces and parts have been accounted for, confirm interview schedules and touch base with university reps to try to guarantee a show without incident.

SATURDAY: Lights, camera ...

At 6 a.m., segments are taped for the early "SportsCenter," while crews pull cover footage from campus and capture preparations for the game. The on-set team presses for the weekly 10 a.m. on-air deadline. Fowler, Corso and Herbstreit recap the week and run through the day's action, right up to their predictions at noon. When cameras cut to the ESPN noon game, the crew tapes more analysis to accompany the afternoon show and pull together footage for ESPNNews, ABC and SportsCenter.

SOURCE: COLLEGEGAMEDAY.COM