

At Issue:

Should the BCS system be substantially changed?



BRIAN FREDERICK
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPORTS FANS
COALITION, [HTTP://SPORTSEANS.ORG](http://SPORTSEANS.ORG)*

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the BCS should not only be substantially changed, it should be eliminated entirely. The latest round of conference realignments is occurring because schools are desperate to get into conferences with BCS “Automatic Qualifying” status and thus, greater television revenues. University presidents have thrown off all pretense of preserving the historic traditions of college football or adhering to any educational ideals in favor of lucrative television contracts. Without a postseason playoff, these contracts become the end-all of college football, and thus, intercollegiate athletics.

Why doesn't the NCAA host a postseason championship for football, like it does for every other college sport? Basically, the traditional powers that be in college football (an elite group of conference commissioners, university presidents and athletic directors) would rather maintain control of a system that benefits them rather than transform the system to a more egalitarian one. They do so despite the significant money they are leaving on the table by not having a playoff. Some estimate that a playoff would generate \$1 billion per year more than the BCS. Obviously, that's money that our colleges, universities and states could really use.

Instead, we're stuck with a bizarre and unfair system of determining a national champion based on human bias and computer formulas for which there is no oversight. Moreover, there are questions about the legality of the BCS and whether it violates antitrust laws. The mere fact that the system itself is at best unfair and at worst illegal is reason enough to scrap it.

The BCS claims its system places a value on the importance of the regular season. In fact, a playoff would make the regular season even more compelling for most schools. The BCS also points to the “great traditions” of the bowls. Yet these same bowl organizations themselves are rife with corruption and are being run like for-profit businesses instead of the charities they claim to be. Moreover, the BCS itself killed the heart of the “tradition” argument by elevating one game — and only one game — above the other bowl games.

Imagine if we had a college football postseason like college basketball's March Madness. For three or four weeks in December and January, all of America would tune in to see the do-or-die games. The drama would culminate in a game that would approach the ratings of the Super Bowl. Best of all, we could celebrate college football for being college football . . . and not the BCS.



BILL HANCOCK
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES*

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two weeks ago, 20 million college football fans watched LSU and Alabama in a matchup of the two top-ranked teams in the country. One reason for such high interest was that the game had significant implications for the national championship.

So did the LSU-Oregon game earlier in the season. And the Boise State-Georgia game. And Stanford-Oregon, Oklahoma State-Texas A&M, Clemson-Florida State, Nebraska-Wisconsin, and many others.

The fact is, because the national title or a bowl invitation is on the line, every game counts in college football. And that gives us the best regular season in sports. As Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy said, “in college football, every week is March Madness.” It's a three-month roller coaster ride and teams must prove themselves every weekend. Fans cherish that excitement.

In addition to preserving a fantastic regular season, the BCS also ensures that the top two teams meet in a bowl game, which only happened eight times in the 56 years before the BCS. In the BCS era, in contrast, fans have seen this premier matchup for 13 straight years. And more folks watch the immensely popular championship game than the NCAA basketball finals, the NBA Championships, the Stanley Cup Finals and even the World Series.

The BCS also preserves America's great bowl tradition, which provides a meaningful experience for many student-athletes, band members, cheerleaders and fans. A bowl trip is an experience that they'll savor the rest of their lives, and no other sport has anything like it. When football players from all 11 conferences were asked recently whether they preferred the current BCS-and-bowls system or a 16-team playoff format, 70.4 percent chose the current system. In a similar poll, 93 percent of coaches agreed.

They know what we all know — the current BCS arrangement works well because it is driven by on-field competition all season. They know that college football has the best regular season in sports, and they know that their post-season hopes will be determined by their regular-season body of work over three scintillating months.

The BCS has increased post-season access, revenue and exposure for all teams. It has helped college football's popularity grow to record levels. So enjoy the rest of the greatest regular season in sports, followed by one of America's most unique and beloved traditions, the college football bowl games.