



IT'S A NEW YEAR, BUT EVERYTHING IS THE SAME OLE.

BY Kerry Schmidt 01-06-2008

Yea, it's 2008, a new year. Whoopeeee!

Nothing new about the sports news, though. It's still the same ole boring stuff.

Except for the beginning of the REAL NFL season. The next two weekends are great. One and out. The playoffs. Playoffs? Wow. What a great idea for College Football.

29 of the mostly bad bowl games are over with, but we still have the (Quote) National Championship (BS Bowl) tomorrow night. They tell us that either LSU or Ohio State will be the best team in the land by late Monday night.

But wait. There are two more really interesting bowl games this weekend.

And I guess they saved the best for last.

Be sure and get ready for Rutgers and Ball State on Saturday, and then Tulsa versus Bowling Green on Sunday. Now that ought to really get the heart pumping.

You just know that those two games will be a major distraction for the four NFL playoff games on those two days.

Of the 29 bowl games already played, only about four or five were of any importance, and all they did was cause the BCS system to show even more clearly how FUBAR it is. For the other 25 or so meaningless games, all it did was give a couple hundred thousand students an excuse to spend mom and dad's money to go to the games so they could get very drunk and stoned.

Now that is not a bad thing, really, but it sure as hell is hardly newsworthy.

ESPN did a verbal poll of over 100,000 fans, and 49% say that USC is the best team in the country right now.

I agree. When they lost their two games, they had 14 of their 22 starters out, including their entire offensive line, QB and three linebackers. Of those 14, five are All-Americans.

USC played Illinois in the Rose Bowl. Illinois beat now No. 1 Ohio State. USC then squeaked past Illinois, 49-17, while running up a Rose Bowl record of 633 yards.

A playoff is definitely needed. At least, this year, a "plus one" would be OK.

Winner of the BSC game plays USC at a neutral site. That would really be a game!

But, never happen. Screw 'em all.

One other noteworthy bowl was the Fiesta Bowl. For two reasons: First, Oklahoma was really embarrassed last year when they lost to Boise State. After crying that they should be in the BCS Bowl, they promptly went out and got hammered by West Virginia, 48-28. Couldn't happen to a better team.

And, showing good guys don't always finish last, WVA made Bill Stewart their new head coach. He took over as interim coach when no-class Rich Rodriguez bolted late one night with nary a good by, to go coach Michigan.

Stewart came out the good guy on this one.

Trying to find enough newsworthy crap to fill a column right now is not easy.

I have beaten the dead dog that is the BCS system enough, and the NFL playoffs are not started yet, so what to do.

Put some really worthless junk in this space.

The Patriots finished with a perfect season, 16-0. And their coach, Bill Belichick was named the AP coach of the year. And Bill got a million dollar contract for Sony Video cameras, so all is well there.

In no particular order, some more of the "who the hell cares" stuff.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Roger Clemmons, interviewed for CBS's "60 Minutes" – which will air tonight, said he never used banned substances and that his trainer, Brian McNamee, only injected him with the painkiller lidocaine and vitamin B-12, according to a release of a portion of the program to be shown Sunday.

McNamee had told the Mitchell committee that he injected Clemmons with steroids in 1998, 2000 and 2001 and injected him with human growth hormone in 2000.

Clemmons told Mike Wallace that was not true. "Swear?" asked Wallace. "Swear," Clemmons replied.

McNamee said the bottles he used were clearly named Winstrol, an anabolic steroid. McNamee also has hired Earl Ward, as his lawyer, and says he plans to sue Clemmons if he calls (McNamee) a liar during the 60 Minutes interview.

Stay tuned. Maybe Barry Bonds can be a witness at the trial.

For the New York Giants – Tampa Bay Bucs playoff game, Ticketmaster is the main source of sales for the game. Problem is, they were only selling to people from Florida. New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo quickly notified Ticketmaster of a law suit if this continued, so I guess TM decided to take New York's money also. Hillary Clinton endorsed the suit.

Cam Cameron was one and done with the Dolphins. Bill Parcells canned him. I guess it was because he won one game, thus screwing up a perfect 0-16 season.

Have you noticed how long college games are compared to NFL games? They average almost 20 minutes longer.

Two things I would love to see in college ball. First, why do they need to stop the clock every time a team makes a first down? They don't in the NFL and it works fine. What's with that?

And pass interference in college ball. The penalty sucks. I bet that nearly half of all the PI calls in college are intentional. Why? Well, if a guy is about to beat you for a 50-yard TD, smack him. You only get a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot, so to commit an intentional foul makes sense. Except for the game itself.

There is one pretty big side note to one of this weekend's playoff games.

Giants/Bucs.

The New York press has been making a pretty big deal out of this being the third time the younger Manning has a chance to "redeem" himself for past post season failures.

They pointed out that his famous father played for 14 seasons, and then of course his brother is doing OK.

The talk (a near roar, actually), is that after failures in the past 2 post seasons, E. Manning needs to show he can rise above the sometimes "inconsistency and mediocrity" that at times has marked his first four seasons since being the No. 1 overall draft choice in 2004.

When asked about this, Archie winces. "I know Sunday is going to be a pivotal game in his career," he says, referring to the pregame buildup surrounding his son. "I don't want to go there." After all the talk of the previous years and good/bad, the press comes back to the Jekyll/Hyde referral for the QB.

They ask, will it be the one that nearly led the Giants to an upset of the Patriots last week, when he completed 22 of 32 for 251 yards and four TD's.

Or will he be the QB who ranked 25th among NFL QB's during the regular season, with a meager 73.9 passer rating and barely had more TD passes (23) than INT's (20)? Those 20 INT's tied him for most picks with the Lions' Jon Kitna and the Bengals' Carson Palmer, and he has only completed 56.1% of his passes.

Archie says, "Eli differs from Peyton in that he was always slow to anger or become excited. That's just the way he is, but I can assure people Eli has fire. He's a great competitor. He just doesn't want the whole world to see it."



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

And yes, Eli is aware of the talk of those who wonder if he will always be stuck in the gigantic shadow of his older brother. Some even say, “play more like your brother.”

Eli says, “I know what’s going on. I’m not oblivious to (sic) the outside world. I’m just trying to do it the only way I know how to play. I can’t be someone else.”

I personally know and have talked to all three, and Eli is a really great guy with a great sense of humor. I hope he can rise up. New York is a pretty heartless place when you don’t live up to their expectations.

And he does not exactly have the best players surrounding him.

Living down here in New Orleans, obviously the BCS Bowl is getting plenty of ink. For LSU, it’s almost like a home game.

Ohio State has seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time groaning at the perceived multi-media shots that say they are not good enough to be here.

It has even been mentioned here that, let’s say, the two play pretty much a stinker of a game, and LSU wins, say 13-9, with neither team looking like a real champion.

The coach’s poll is forced to vote for the winner of this game, but if the above were to occur, it’s a long shot possibility that the AP-Media poll could vote USC No. 1 (See 2003) and then what?

I do not look for that kind of a game between these two teams, but, whoa, what an argument we just maybe could have. Lots of fun.

I’ll finish up with a short note on a “sport” that I cannot at all understand. Why anyone would want to do it, and yet for those that participate, it’s like a religion.

The PBR circuit, or The Professional Bull Riding association.

I have spent nearly an hour trying to come up with one reason why a sane man would want to try to stay on top of a 2,000 pound crazed steer for eight seconds.

If you make it to the championships alive, the first place winner gets a whopping \$250,000. But if you win the overall world title and coveted “gold buckle,” you win one million dollars.

In the past 20 years, ONLY 11 riders have been killed, but it is estimated that any rider who stays on circuit for over five years has averaged nine broken bones, two concussions and “numerous internal injuries and mangled hands and feet.”

And these riders are not huge muscle bound guys. Just the opposite. “This is not a strength sport,” says Kody Lostroh, a former world champion. He is 5’6” and weighs 155 pounds. “It is much more about agility and reaction time. No matter how strong you are, the bull is much stronger, I assure you.”

So, no steroid testing. Not for riders, but they will be testing the bulls this year. No way I do that job. How are you going to get a urine sample from him or jab him with a needle to draw blood?!

No freakin way!

But as insane as this sport and the people that partake therein, it has a very large and loyal following. The PBR tour covers the USA, Canada and Mexico. Fans can be as fanatical as some NASCAR fans. The main difference is that the NASCAR race takes over two hours, and the bull ride often lasts less than the needed eight seconds. And if you want to come to see the rider bucked off, that is what happens about 80% of the time.

No thanks, I’ll pass.

I did watch it on TV once, and it was actually cool to see these guys get thrown and horned and stomped on. If you like that sort of stuff.

I’ll keep my 26 surgeries and stay on the couch.