



TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE SPORTS WORLD

BY Kerry Schmidt 01-13-2008

The college football season is FINALLY over – thank God, but still enough confusion abounds to keep the pot stirring.

Then you have the real sports match-ups, the athletes versus their trainers. Who is telling the truth? Answer: Probably nobody, at least completely.

And some lady says the only way to beat Tiger Woods is “to lynch him in a back alley.”

And the current NFL season (2007-08) set a record. 39 players got arrested.

Of course, in this new century, 67 pro athletes have been and/or still are in jail.

Figure it out.

Anyway, I can now say my last piece on the FUBAR BCS and put it to bed until next season, when, I am quite sure, it will be just as screwed up as it was this year.

LSU is the National Champ, and it is not a split deal this year. 12-2 LSU beat 11-2 Ohio State, 38-24.

But before the confetti had stopped falling in the New Orleans Super Dome and surrounding Bourbon Street, the talking heads started making cases for the “real champion.”

The most common name that came up is USC. As one scribe pointed out, Ohio State lost to Illinois, lost to LSU by 14, and USC crushed Illinois in the Rose Bowl, 49-17.

But LSU is the champ, and that’s it.

If ever a “plus one” gambit was appropriate, it would be for this year.

USC and LSU match up. Yes, emotions abound down here in LSU land, and many say the system worked and LSU is the winner. Yes, they are.

But don’t you think of how great it could have been to see one more game, this weekend, LSU vs. USC, on a neutral field? That would take all the questions away from the polls and computers and shysters.

At least some talk among the old farts is the “possibility” of a “plus one” system.

But the first real dot of hope comes from Michael Adams, President of the NCAA Executive Committee.

He is now coming out for a real live, YES, YES...Playoff System!

He voted against such an idea last season, but has changed his mind. A good part of that reason may well be that as President of Georgia, he thought his team should have been in the BCS title game.

His stated reason for now wanting a playoff is that the NCAA itself has lost control of the bowl system.

He stated, “I find it interesting that our most high-profile sport is the only place where we as presidents have turned the end game over to another group.” He goes on to say “there has been a concentration of power among the conference and bowl commissioners. I believe it is time to take that power out of their hands.”

In other words, he wants the NCAA as a whole, not just the heads of each conference and bowl game(s), to decide the format.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

The biggest stumbling block is the Pac-10 and Big-10. They have a long time tradition of having a school from each meeting in the Rose Bowl (unless the BCS title game is the Rose that year). But even then that could be a team from one or both of the above conferences.

See, try figuring it out.

However, just the fact that a high-powered individual will propose a real-life playoff format next week at their meetings, gives us a glimmer of hope.

Probably not in my life-time, but someday.

He says an NCAA panel would select the field of teams and use the Rose, Sugar, Fiesta and Orange Bowls for the January 1 semi-finals, with the finals the following week end. According the ESPN poll, this is what 88% of the fans want.

But Myles Brand, the current NCAA President, said, “The NCAA would not run any playoff.” What?

Then he really makes it impossible to figure it out when he adds, “Maybe the NCAA can be Switzerland here. Maybe we can be the place in which some objectivity and neutrality takes place.”

Switzerland has a playoff team? Or plan?

And how can someone who has screwed up this situation for so long actually use the words “objectivity” and “neutrality?”

How about common sense? Listen to the fans, have playoffs, generate millions more than you do now and keep everyone fat and happy.

Common sense?! Not a chance.

And with the dust not yet settled and the arguments raging, USA TODAY has already come out with their 2008 College rankings. In order, USC, Georgia, LSU, Ohio State (no Big-10 teams should be allowed), Oklahoma – the just lost their 4ths BCS bowl out of 5), Florida, West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri and Clemson. How in the hell can they come up with this ranking right now? I can’t figure it out.

What is REALLY going on with Roger Clemens? I can’t figure this out either.

Obviously from reading and hearing all about his “pain in the ass” problem, it really just boils down to he said – he said. His trainer said he did, Clemens says he did not.”

Now if you take Barry Bonds’ example, Clemens is already guilty. People will believe Brian McNamee, his FORMER trainer, not Clemens. Like Barry Bonds, here is a case where a man is guilty by public perception. Whatever the facts are, they don’t matter.

Clemens is guilty.

As a sportswriter, I have had access to many NFL and other locker rooms. What if I said I had seen a player take steroids?

He would be dead. So would I, but that is not the issue. This is why all these individuals should be considered innocent until proven otherwise. But, that is not and will never be the case.

So, he’s guilty. Period! Not even a playoff system will help him. (Just messing with ya).

Then we had the infamous and long, taped phone conversation between Clemens and McNamee. The only real aspect of that was that McNamee asked Clemens 19 times, “What do you want me to do?” Clemens never answered him.

And, Clemens has filed a suit against McNamee.



Anyway, they both are scheduled to testify before Congress on February 13.

Think Bonds will show up?

If I never hear the word steroids again, that will be just fine. Take whatever the hell you want and just play the damn game and shut up!

Female golf Channel anchor Kelly Tilghman said on TV last week that the only way that young golfers could catch up with Tiger Woods would be to “lynch him in a back alley.” She quickly apologized for her “poorly chosen words,” and said she also apologized personally to Tiger.

Tiger’s agent, Mark Steinberg, said, “We regret if her words offended anyone. It’s a complete non-issue. Kelly and Tiger are good friends, and while the words may have been a poor choice, there was absolutely no ill intent whatsoever.”

Regardless, the Golf Channel suspended her for two weeks.

What are they trying to prove by doing that? Only Tiger could be offended and he clearly is not, so why prolong the misspeak by the two week suspension? I can’t figure it out.

NOTE: Had Kelly been a male, she probably would have been fired.

Go figure.

Now, there is one thing I know and am sure of. This weekend is always my favorite football weekend.

The NFL wannabee wild card teams have been dispatched. Now we have the remaining eight best teams facing off.

An interesting aspect. I cannot remember when, if ever, has there been a time when each of the remaining four games has one team favored by over a touchdown! I said in an earlier column that this was the season of have and have nots.

Judging by the point spreads for these playoff games, that is still the case.

But each game stacks up as a good one.

The Giants are the smallest point spread team. They are a 7 ½ point underdog to Dallas. But for “the other Manning,” Eli, just having won a playoff game got a giant monkey off his back. After nearly ruining the Patriots perfect season on the last week of the regular games, Eli led this team to an upset victory over Tampa bay, 24-14.

While Dallas is tough to beat at home, the Giants are 8-1 in their last 9 road games.

Cowboy Mouth Terrell Owens will play, after sitting out the last game of the regular season and the bye week with a sprained ankle. If he is completely healed, I think the Boys win, but if he is not so healed, Eli could take a huge step towards building his image. I will take the Giants in an upset. Have to. I like Eli and hate the Cowboys.

Surprising Brett Favre and his Packers are home to Seattle. Guess what. Seattle plays in an indoor stadium, and well, NO team wants to have to play in Green Bay in January.

Look for Favre’s amazing comeback season to go at least one more game.

The other Manning, Peyton, hosts San Diego. The Colts are favored by 9. Peyton is just a machine in the playoffs, so I look for him to play on, and cover the spread.

Then you have the 16-0 Patriots. They are favored by a whopping 13 ½ points over Jacksonville. Depending on the weather, this could be a close game. The Pats have looked mortal the last few weeks, and Jacksonville has come on strong, especially on defense. If I was a betting man (I am), I take the Jags and the 13 ½. An upset is very unlikely because of Bill Belichick and Tom Brady, but you never know.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

I have never been really able to figure out who will win these games, but I will be in front of my 52" flat screen plasma, home theatre set up and a fire in the fire place.
Now if I could just figure all this crap out.....