



## NFL COMING DOWN TO EXCITING END. NCAA HAS SOME PROBLEMS

By Kerry Schmidt      12-21-2008

The college bowl games began this weekend. YAWN!

I hope everyone was glued to the TV for the ever-so-important first four of 34 bowl games. WOW! You had the so highly waited for Eagle Bank Bowl, New Mexico Bowl, St. Petersburg Bowl and the New Orleans Bowl.

They all also had some sponsors names therein, but no free advertising here!

I mean, Navy VS. Wake Forest was a hot ticket. So was Colorado State VS. Fresno State. Then add in So. Florida VS. Memphis, BYU VS. Arizona and in the “Drunk Town” Bowl – New Orleans, mighty Troy VS. Southern MS.

And in the coming weeks, you can stay glued to teams like Northern and Western Michigan, Florida Atlantic (sure as hell not Florida Pacific), Houston – they’re in the Fort Worth Bowl, Nevada and several other well known schools.

I may watch the toilet bowl.

Wake me up starting next year, the Rose Bowl on New Year’s Day.

Now, I’m sure all of you know the tremendous graduation rates of all these college jocks.

Well, over the last few years, many schools are bragging that they have raised those graduation rates. A tad bit.

But let’s take a look at these great success stories.

B. David Ridpath was (past tense) the compliance director for athletic services at Marshall.

That means that it was his job to make sure that the jocks were keeping up with their studies and GPA’s.

Now it was “suggested” to Rid path, and many of his counterparts, that the best way to keep these players eligible, was, more often than not, “to steer these kids’ away from any tough major, thus making it easier to stay eligible.”

So instead of pre-med, biology, economics and other such majors, they were nudged into majors in “university studies,” or sociology or communications or, the really tough one, “general studies.”

When Ridpath began to complain that these majors would not really qualify them for many jobs, he was “encouraged” to continue in this manner.

Soon, he was, basically, forced to quit.

It took him a long time to get another job, he said, because, as he alleges, the “word was out that he would not go along with the program.”

He has filed suit against Marshall.

Note: Marshall was later placed on probation for academic failure.

He is now an asst. professor of sports administration at Ohio University. He also is a member of the Drake Group, a national network of faculty members who advise athletes towards majors that would qualify the athletes for jobs after graduation.

In the 2007-08 seasons at UNLV, for example, while only 5% of all students majored in university studies, 60% of all juniors and seniors were players on the football team, 58% on baseball and a whopping 83% on the basketball team.

At Georgia Tech, generally regarded as a good academic institute, “general management” was the major of 82% for football, 83% for baseball and 62.5% for basketball.

Furthermore, “cheating was rampant” in the athletic arena.

Chris Bowser, a football player at UNLV said, “Football players hang around other football players. Somehow, one guy gets a list of answers – I don’t know how (DUH) – and he shares it



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with the other players. You go in and take the test, and you know what the answers are.” As Gomer Pyle would say, “Surprise, Surprise,”

Solomon Smart (good name), Elton Shackelford and Dustin Villepigue played for prominent athletic teams at UNLV.

They all majored in university studies.

But when they graduated, they found that there were, for the most part, no job openings for grads with this degree.

One athlete bucked the system. C.P. Schlatter, an All-Big Ten lineman at Minnesota, said no, and majored in nursing. His coaches quickly suggested he take the easier major, but he stood fast. Some of his teammates kidded him about his major, but he went on to graduate, and he was a three-time Academic All American.

So, while many of Minnesota’s athletes, class of 2008, are jobless, Schlatter has a full-time nursing job at Fairview Southside Hospital in Edina, Minn. He makes \$55,000 a year.

But Schlatter, sadly, is in a very large minority.

And again, none of this should come as a surprise.

Big time NCAA sports, especially football, are HUGE. This year’s BCS Bowl Championship teams, Oklahoma and Florida, will each earn \$14 million, just for this one game! An estimated additional \$13 million profit is earned for the regular season.

Sad, but true.

As I said last week, the NFL and MLB are cutting staff due to the economy.

The NFL’s “Minor League” Arena Football, will not exist for the 2009 season.

Founded in 1987, they announced they will shelve this year and work toward “improving its economic model.”

MLB has done likewise.

But apparently, the New York Yankees don’t know about that.

As I said last week, they shelled out over half a BILLION bucks for contracts to four players.

Now, dem Damn Yankees have asked the city of New York for \$370 million in bonds for their new stadium! Said stadium will cost over 1 billion, and the Steinfuchers and Yankees will own it, not the city!

Pretty good gig.

Yep, this NFL season has been a good one. Some surprising teams have jumped in, others have died, and with just two weeks left in the season, 17 of the 32 teams are in position to have at least 10-win seasons.

However, only 12 teams go to the playoffs, so some very good teams will stay home.

In the last several years, there have been only a handful of teams that dominated. That led to some teams with 9-7 and even 8-8 making the playoffs. Not this year.

In the AFC East, New England ruled. In the South, it was Peyton Manning’s Colts and in the West, it was San Diego.

The Patriots, sans Tom Brady, are tied for their division lead with the Favre-led Jets and Miami, all at 9-5.

Miami!?!? They were 1-15 last year!

Some old guy, Bill Parcells, took over the Dolphins, made several player changes, a new coach, and VOLA, 9-5.

This just cements Parcells’ excellence. Everywhere he has gone, he made great improvements in that team.

Peyton Manning, after a bad start, has won 7 straight games, most of them come-from-behind jobs, and is in second place, behind another big surprise, Tennessee, who, at 12- 2, have the



league's best record. And, the big story there is that 35-year old Kerry Collins is the QB. He's playing great.

Pittsburgh is once again atop the AFC North, with Baltimore 2 games back.

The Steelers have a great, dominant defense, always a trademark with them. They are ranked NO. 1 in just about every defensive category. But the Ravens are second in just about every defensive category.

Anyone who missed last weeks Steelers/Ravens game missed one hell of a defensive struggle. It was what Dick Butkis, Ronnie Lott, and John Madden call "smash-mouth" football. There were some unbelievable collisions in that game.

With just over 3 minutes left in the game, Pittsburgh trailed 9-6. All field goals.

Pittsburgh drove the length of the field and Rothlisberger threw a TD pass with just over a minute left.

That pass will forever be known as the "one inch pass."

The receiver caught it just inside the goal line, but the referrers ruled he was tackled with the nose of the ball being one inch outside the goal line.

Reviews showed it was nearly impossible to tell. But it was overturned, a real surprise since on any reviews, there has to be irrefutable proof to change a call.

But, the "one inch TD" stood. Great game, although I'm sure Baltimore did not agree.

In the NFC, the Giants are proving that just perhaps a team can repeat as SB Champs.

They lead the East division at 11-3, though they have lost 2 of their last 3.

Dallas, picked by most to win the SB, trail NY by two games. See last week's column for TO and other stuff.

Carolina, and Atlanta – with a rookie QB, Matt Flynn, were not supposed to be contenders. Well, Carolina leads the NFC South, 11-3, with Atlanta and Tampa Bay at 9-5.

Chicago was the pick for the NFC North. They are, at 8-6, a game back of the Vikings, at 9-5.

In the NFC West, the big surprise is Arizona. Usually bottom feeders, they are 8-6 and led by 37-year old Kurt Warner, who could just be the MVP this year.

And, of course, there are some teams that are doing just what they were supposed to do. STINK! Cincinnati is just 2-11-1. KC is 2-12, Saint Louis likewise.

Once formidable Seattle is a lowly 3-11. Thus, My 49-ers, at 5-9, aren't in the cellar this year.

But the team of the year, the one generating much excitement, is Detroit.

They are 0-14! The huge guess is can they be perfect? Winless.

Their best shot at ruining the perfect record is today. They host the Saints.

The Saints have proven, for nearly 40 years, that they can lose to anybody on any given day.

Don't know why, but odds makers say it is 46,000 to one to go undefeated, but it is 186,000 to one to go winless. ???

The Lions close at Green Bay. Thus I think today is Detroit's best shot to screw up and win one.

Speaking of Green Bay, I wonder what their fans are thinking. Aaron Rodgers replaced the non-replaceable, Brett Favre. With a young team, many had them in the playoffs, since they finished one game away from the Super Bowl last year.

But they are out of it, at 5-9.

Meanwhile, the Jets, who most figured to be lucky to finish at .500. are, as said above, 9-5 and in the playoff hunt. And, most agree, it is thanks to.....

Brett Favre.

Would love to go have a beer in a Green Bay tavern about now.

As we are near the end of the regular season, the Pro-Bowl votes are coming in. As you may or may not know, the fans, along with all the players pick the teams.

The Jets, third in their division, lead all teams with 7 players. The Giants are second with 6.



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Now there are some good players on both teams, but the Jets lead?? Seems to me there is a bit of fan ballot-stuffing going on. I can see Favre, guard Alan Faneca and center Kris Jenkins, but four more. No way!

But I guess it doesn't really matter, because virtually no one watches the Pro-Bowl. And, the players, for them, it's just a free vacation in Hawaii. They pretty much go through the motions. Final NFL junk.

The league has found a way to cut down on drunken, rowdy fans who get out of line.

Most stadiums put a message on their scoreboards telling fans they can text message security if there is a problem. By doing it this way, the reported drunks don't know how, or by whom they were turned in.

The NFL says it is working well.

Only three teams, Tennessee, St. Louis and New Orleans do not have such a system.

New Orleans? There is not a town in this country where it is easier to get drunk! They even have "drive through" daiquiris places. Yep, you can just roll to the drive through window, order up – the extra large daiquiris hold up to 6 shots of booze.!

They serve them in styrofoam cups, called "Go-Cups." They put the plastic cup on it with the slit therein for the straw. But they do not put the straw in for you, because then that would be an "open container."

But, somehow you manage to insert said straw, and bingo, a drunk on the run.

Perhaps the Saints figure most everyone will be drunk anyway, so.....

And, having been a beat writer for the Saints for 8 years, I can tell you, most of them ARE drunk. But most of them are friendly drunks. Any bad stuff is mostly from out-of-towners, though, given the Saints proclivity for losing, some home town boys get it on. Most don't though, since they are so used to them losing.

Speaking of drinking, time for my single malt.