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“National Championship”
by
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This year’s collegiate football season, nationwide, has been one of the screwiest ever because of the rife of upsets among the top rated universities by those with no winning record. WVU, unfortunately, was the victim of one of those unbelievable upsets. For many of us it stole our joy of the moment and blew our team’s chance of playing for the National Championship this year.

It so happens that this is also the first time in Collegiate Football history, so they say, that a team with two losses will be playing for the National Championship, i.e., LSU. Of course, there have been times when several teams have finished the regular season undefeated and did not get the privilege to vie for the National Championship because the Coaches Poll, or the AP Poll, or the USA Today Poll did not see fit to vote them in a high enough bracket to qualify for National Champions. Who should play for the National Championship?

According to the Wikipedia on-line Encyclopedia it is a very confusing scenario and one which is highly controversial in many circles.

“One of the first major media poll was the AP Poll released in 1936, which is still in use today. This poll utilizes a vast network of sportswriters to determine its rankings. Although modified slightly, another poll still in use today is the Coaches' Poll, which polls a random selection of 62 collegiate football head coaches to determine its rankings. However, both polls failed to take into account bowl game results, often between two top-ranked teams, thus calling into question their designation of a "national champion" prior to the actual end of the season. Until 1968 college football season, the final AP poll of the season was released following the end of the regular season, with the exception of the 1965 season. Beginning in the 1968 season, a post bowl game poll was released and the AP championship reflected the bowl game results.

“The tradition, and the controversy, is carried on today with the Bowl Championship Series ("BCS"), created for the 1998 season, and its predecessors — the Bowl Coalition from seasons 1992 to 1994, and the Bowl Alliance from seasons 1995 to 1997. The AP and Coaches' polls, computer rankings, strength of schedule, and performance against other top teams were combined into a formula, with the top two teams meeting in the BCS National Championship Game. But, the system has not been without controversy.

“Most recently, in 2003 USC did not play in the BCS title game, despite finishing the regular season as #1 in both the AP and Coaches' polls. Under the BCS formula, Oklahoma was ranked #1 at the end of the regular season with LSU #2. Under the BCS agreement, Oklahoma played LSU in the BCS National Championship game. LSU won the BCS title game, giving it the BCS national championship and the #1 ranking in the Coaches' poll, while the sportswriters voted USC #1 in the AP poll. The resulting "split" national championship resulted in more tweaks to the system for 2004.”

Folks, we all know that at any given time, any given football team can beat any other given team regardless of strength of schedule, quality of players, won-loss record or what color uniforms the teams are wearing at the moment. Football is football and when you consider the size and shape of the ball, the physical

contact involved with the players and the monies allocated to different school programs it's amazing that any team can go through the entire season undefeated.

Knowing that any team can pull off a miracle, as Pitt did last week against WVU, it is only right that a playoff system be put in place to allow a higher rated team to be given another chance to prove that they indeed are the better of the two teams, and the best in the particular conference. If they should get whooped again by the same team, then they obviously don't deserve to play for a National Championship. However, according to all sports gurus everywhere the chances of ever having a playoff system in College 1-A Football are slim to none... for no good reason, although loss of money and prestige are said to be the main motivating factors.

During this past week's unfortunate WVU vs Pitt game the announcers kept talking about WVU being the University who has won more games than anyone else without having ever won a National Championship... 663 wins in all. For informational purposes only, you might be interested in knowing those who have won the most National Championships: Notre Dame has won the most with 13; USC and Alabama are next with 11; Oklahoma 9 (who will be playing WVU in the Fiesta Bowl); Ohio State 7; Michigan 7; Minnesota 6; Nebraska 5; Pittsburgh 5; Miami 5; Texas, Tennessee, Georgia and Harvard come in with 4 each.

Folks, let's not get too emotional over a team's failure to reach goals *we've* set for them. The bottom line is this, college football is only a game... albeit one which produces great amounts of money for the schools and organizations that manage and control the game. The college teams who play the game consist of individuals only one step up from adolescence... even if they do weigh an average of 200 pounds or more. The world will not end because WVU missed another chance at the National Championship. Nor will WVU feel a monetary drain on its financial bottom line. All BCS Bowls, including the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl in which WVU will play, generate a payout of approximately \$8.5 Million to each Conference who places a team in the game. It is my understanding that most Conferences then split the monies proportionately among its teams, with the Conference champion (that would be WVU in the Big East) receiving the largest share. Not a bad payday for anyone. Our boys did a fantastic job this year and we should be proud of them.

How soon we forget the days when we were not sure we would even go to a bowl until the week after the season was over? I promise you folks, the sun will come up tomorrow.

See you next week!

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