

Let's Go Bowling or Bowled Over
by Casey Shearer and Chris Brown
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It's that time of year again, it's time to go bowling. So break out your ugly-shirts that say 'Fred' or 'Buck' or 'Billy Joe' on the front and that have ads for Bob's toilet cleaners or the local game and bait shop on the back and those beautiful blue and red shoes, and head for the lanes: bowl season is upon us. Bring on the Rose Bowl, the Nokia Sugar Bowl, the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, the Polan Weedeater Bowl, the Insight.Com Bowl, the Salad Bowl, the Cereal Bowl, the Smoka Bowl and the Casey's false teeth Toilet Bowl.

We have exited November and the college football regular season is over. Yet by no means does that mean all is set in stone for late December and New Year's Day for the National Championship to be decided. For those of you who don't know, get a clue, and for those of you who do, the NCAA division 1-A football national championship is decided not by a playoff like all other NCAA sports, but, believe it or not, by two arbitrary polls. To the casual observer this sounds ridiculous. How can the best football team in the land be decided by a vote, especially when one of the groups voting is sportswriters? (Hey, wait a minute aren't we sportswriters?) Why don't they just play to see who the best team is? But ahhh...mon ami, that would simply be too easy. Plus it would take away all the fun of speculating what team is going to be in what bowl and who's going to win the national championship. A playoff? Come on, that wouldn't be any fun. Seriously though, we are big advocates of a playoff system. March Madness and the NCAA basketball tournament is the singular best three weeks of sports that there is, aside from Hawaiian Tropic's very own Bikini tri-week, and it's easy to imagine how amazing a national college playoff would be pitting, the top sixteen or eight teams in the country in a win or go home situation. But we are realists and know that this is the NCAA we're talking about and common sense will never prevail. So we must make do with what we have and enjoy it as much as possible.

What we have at the moment is a thing entering its third year, known as the Alliance. It sounds like some evil empire out of Star Wars or BattleStar Gallactica, but in reality it is a group of bowls, namely the Sugar Bowl, the Fiesta Bowl and the Orange Bowl. These bowls have agreed to find a way to pit the number one and number two teams in the country against each other in a national championship each season. The national championship game rotates between the three bowls each year, this year it belongs to the FedEx Orange Bowl (Guaranteed to have your national champion delivered overnight.) The Alliance, with six spots in its bowl games, takes the Big 12 champ, the SEC champ, the Big East champ and the ACC champ plus Notre Dame if they are ranked in the top 10 or a the WAC champ if they are in the top 5. That generally leaves one or two at large bids each season. At a glance this seems like a great idea, number one and number two will get to play each other every year, right? Nope, sorry Watson, that is incorrect. The snag in the Alliance is that the Big 10 and the Pac 10 have refused to join in until next season, sending their champions to meet in the Rose Bowl, the granddaddy of them all. This can create problems, such as three years ago. The Orange Bowl had unbeaten #1 Nebraska playing Miami, but unbeaten #2 Penn St. played in the Rose Bowl and won. When Nebraska beat Miami in the so-called national

championship game, the voters decided to screw Penn St like they were a sorority girl and give the entire title to the Huskers. Last year, Arizona St. was unbeaten and ranked #2 in the Rose Bowl, but fortunately for the Alliance they lost and the Alliance had it's championship game. This year, the Alliance is even worse off since unbeaten #1 Michigan will play once-beaten Washington St. in the Rose Bowl. If Michigan wins they will be national champions and the Alliance will be left with a championship game that doesn't decide the championship. Ah. . .you have to love the irony. Next year, the Big 10 and Pac 10 will join the alliance and a #1 vs. #2 showdown will be almost a certainty, but this year the Alliance and the pollsters/teamsters leave us to revel in the possibilities. . .and it appears the possibilities are endless.

With the SEC and Big 12 championship games being played this weekend, eight teams have a shot at winning the national title. That's the simple part, figuring out who goes where is a little more difficult when you throw in the fact that the alliance doesn't choose teams based on ranking beyond it's so-called championship game which will pitting #2 vs. #3 this season. For example, if things go as predicted this weekend and Nebraska beats Texas A&M in the Big 12 championship and Tennessee beats Auburn in the SEC championship, the Orange Bowl would feature #2 Nebraska vs. #3 Tennessee. The Sugar Bowl would then take #4 Florida St. and #9 Ohio St., while the Fiesta would take #15 Syracuse (the Big East champs) and #11 Kansas St. This would mean Ohio St. and Kansas St. would be the at-large selections, leaving UCLA, North Carolina and Florida, ranked 5-7 respectively out in the cold at smaller bowls. However, things could get interesting if Tennessee and/or Nebraska lose this weekend obliging the Alliance to include Texas A&M and/or Auburn, meaning three or four teams not ranked in the top 10 could be in the three most lucrative bowl games. Got it? Good. Chaos and confusion, it's a thing of beauty. In an attempt to clarify things a little bit, let's see how different teams could win the title.

Michigan- they control their own destiny; if they beat Washington St. in the Rose Bowl they win the title outright, regardless of whether Nebraska is undefeated as well. Nebraska- If Michigan loses in the Rose Bowl and the Huskers win out, the trophy will be going back to Lincoln for the third time in four years. Those are the only two certainties, the rest of the possibilities depend on the voters and on Michigan losing. Tennessee- the Vols will have a legitimate claim to the title if Michigan loses and they win the Orange Bowl. Florida St- The Seminoles need either Tennessee or Nebraska to lose this week and then have to beat the other one in the Orange Bowl plus a Michigan loss to have a claim.

The next situation is a very interesting one, it involves the possibility of seven teams finishing with only one loss. If Tennessee loses this weekend to Auburn but wins their bowl game, Florida St then beats Nebraska in the Orange Bowl, Washington St. beats Michigan in the Rose, and North Carolina and Kansas St. win their bowl games then Washington St., Michigan, Florida St., North Carolina, Nebraska, Tennessee and Kansas St. all end up with only one loss. Who do you give the championship to then genius? Brown? Your guess is as good as ours.

An even more interesting scenario would give UCLA a shot at the national title eventhough they have two losses. How is that possible, well sit back, put on your bifocals and read but don't be shocked if your heartbeat rises and your pulse quickens, you're a junky accept it and read on baby. If both Nebraska and Tennessee lose this weekend they would fall in the polls, allowing UCLA, currently #5 to climb to #3 behind

Michigan and Florida St. The Alliance would then have to put UCLA and Florida St. in the Orange Bowl. If UCLA won and Washington St. beat Michigan then the Bruins could ascend to #1 despite the fact that they have two losses and that Washington St. who would have only won loss beat them in the opening game of the season. In this scenario the final poll could have UCLA or Washington St. at #1 or the title could go to North Carolina. Wouldn't that be a humdinger.

See, isn't all this confusion, debate and speculation wonderful? With a playoff system we wouldn't have any of it, nor would we have this brilliant piece of journalistic writing (that would most definitely be a tragedy), nor would Chris be staring at those cheerleaders. However, a playoff system would crown a true champion rather than this mickey mouse system of letting coaches and sportswriters decide who's the best. Like being bisexual [or since Rahul is going to censor that: Like shitting in the woods. . .] the current system makes for god fun, but it just isn't right. But we have what we have and perhaps Michigan will save all the confusion by winning the Rose Bowl and painting the national title Wolverine Maize and Blue. If they do, we'll be the first singing "Hail to the victors valiant." But wouldn't it be something if everything fell into place and the celebration was painted Bruin baby-blue and gold. Well then we'd be singing another fight song, one that begins with an eight-clap and ends with UCLA fight, fight, fight. Whatever happens, don't forget your bowling shoes because it can get slippery out there.

Chris Brown B'00 thinks bowling shirts are in style.

Casey Shearer B'00 used to think there was a football game called the Salad Bowl

Rahul, if you want you can add this schedule/forecast on at the end but it's not necessary.

Projected Bowl Lineup

Projections of bowl matchups, which in many cases are made based on the outcome of conference championship games. All times Pacific.

SATURDAY, DEC. 20

* LAS VEGAS BOWL: Air Force vs. Oregon, 3 p.m. (ESPN2)

THURSDAY, DEC. 25

* ALOHA BOWL (At Honolulu):

Washington vs. Michigan State, 12:30 p.m. (ABC)

FRIDAY, DEC. 26

* MOTOR CITY BOWL (At Pontiac, Mich.): Marshall or Toledo vs. TBA, 5 p.m. (ESPN)

SATURDAY, DEC. 27

* INSIGHT.COM BOWL (At Tucson): New Mexico or Colorado State vs. Arizona, 5 p.m. (ESPN)

SUNDAY, DEC. 28

* INDEPENDENCE BOWL (At Shreveport, La.): Louisiana State vs. Iowa, 5 p.m. (ESPN)

MONDAY, DEC. 29

* HUMANITARIAN BOWL (At Boise, Idaho): Utah State vs. Cincinnati, 12:30 p.m. (ESPN2)

* CARQUEST BOWL (At Miami): Georgia Tech vs. West Virginia, 4:30 p.m. (TBS)

* HOLIDAY BOWL (At San Diego): Oklahoma State vs. Colorado State or New Mexico, 5 p.m. (ESPN)
TUESDAY, DEC. 30
* ALAMO BOWL (At San Antonio): Missouri vs. Purdue, 5 p.m. (ESPN)
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31
* SUN BOWL (At El Paso): Arizona State vs. Notre Dame, 11 a.m. (CBS)
* LIBERTY BOWL (At Memphis, Tenn.): Pittsburgh vs. Southern Mississippi, 12:30 p.m. (ESPN)
* FIESTA BOWL (At Tempe, Ariz.): Kansas State vs. Syracuse, 4 p.m. (CBS)
THURSDAY, JAN. 1
* OUTBACK BOWL (At Tampa, Fla.): Wisconsin vs. Auburn, 8 a.m. (ESPN)
* GATOR BOWL (At Jacksonville, Fla.): North Carolina vs. Virginia Tech, 9:30 a.m. (NBC)
* CITRUS BOWL (At Orlando, Fla.): Penn State vs. Florida, 10 a.m. (ABC)
* COTTON BOWL (At Dallas): Texas A&M vs. UCLA, 10:30 a.m. (CBS)
* ROSE BOWL (At Pasadena): Washington State vs. Michigan, 2 p.m. (ABC)
* SUGAR BOWL (At New Orleans): Florida State vs. Ohio State, 5 p.m. (ABC)
FRIDAY, JAN. 2
* PEACH BOWL (At Atlanta): Georgia vs. TBA, noon (ESPN)
* ORANGE BOWL (At Miami): Nebraska vs. Tennessee, 5 p.m. (CBS)