

# **Miller Play-Off Proposal**

## **I. GENESIS**

### **Vision**

This plan evolved out of several debates, sometimes heated, with friends and family members of how to design a methodology, which would derive a true, uncontested National Championship of Division I NCAA college football.

### **Early Stages**

Research was conducted on all conferences, the four independents, and existing bowls. In 2008/2009, 34 bowl games required 68 teams to participate. This represented 57% of the 120 FBS eligible schools. The bowls began on December 20, 2008 and ended on January 8, 2009 with the usual controversy as to what team was really the national champion.

### **Prevailing Philosophy**

In order to bring about change, I subscribe to the philosophy that you must “follow the money”. This plan does just that.

## **II. MISSION STATEMENT**

The clear objective of this plan is to provide Division I college football an indisputable national championship while preserving as many of the rich “bowl traditions” that college football has enjoyed for many years.

### **III. CHAMPIONSHIP STRUCTURE**

1. There are 48 teams invited to the New Bowl Championship Series. The selection committee (which may or may not be made up of the current members of the BCS committee) ranks the 48 teams, numbers 1 through 48 and “seeds” them much like the NCAA men’s basketball tournament (see 2008 Mock-up Bracket).
2. The top 16 teams (Tier 1) receive a first round bye.
3. Tier 2 (17 through 32) host Tier 3 (33 through 48) always commencing the Friday and Saturday immediately following Thanksgiving.
4. The first round winners play the bye teams in the second round at already existing “first tier” bowl locations commencing the Thursday, Friday and Saturday the week immediately following Thanksgiving.
5. Those winners play the following Friday and Saturday at already existing “second tier” bowl locations.
6. Those 8 winners play in four games on Christmas Day in the Citrus, the Fiesta, the Sugar, and the Outback bowls.
7. Those 4 winners play in two games on January 1 in the Rose Bowl and the Orange Bowl each year.
8. The winners play for the undisputed national championship, when the TV executives decide, but no earlier than January 8th. The Rose, Orange, Sugar, and Fiesta bowls continue to rotate the national championship game exactly the same as they do now.

#### **IV. COMPELLING OPPORTUNITY**

1. This plan provides the opportunity and framework for the NCAA and the various bowl board members to work together so that everyone “wins” including the fan by having an undisputed national championship decided each and every year on the field of play.
2. Last year there were 34 bowls. This plan requires 31 bowl locations in addition to round one’s 16 home games. My plan currently requires that 3 current bowls be left out of the New BCS. The option exists that the 3 bowls that I left out replace 3 of the home teams so that only the top 13 teams of the second tier (17 through 29) would have home games in the first round (instead of 16).
3. I have included the Nielsen Ratings and the viewership numbers (Bowls). My belief is that the TV ratings of the first three rounds of the New BCS tournament would significantly increase. I will leave it to other professionals that can accurately predict what this increase would be, but it no doubt translates into “more money” for all to share. The NCAA would have more than a little to say about how the money is “shared”.
4. The increased viewership and attendance at these games would greatly solidify some first tier bowls’ financial positions. It appears that the “big four” share proceeds which enables them to all provide an equal “pay out” to each conference/team. This type of structure may be investigated to enable each round to have the same type of equal pay-out.
5. Although teams that advance should be fairly compensated for each victory, a compensation plan would be devised to where the advancing teams receive a limited pay-out, with the excess left for the NCAA or others to decide how to share the overages. The 20 teams left out of the 2008 Mock-up Bracket would have grossed approximately \$17,375,000. To make up this loss revenue to these schools, some of the additional revenue due to this plan could go to FBS conferences/team. Obviously, the net amount required by each institution would be far less than the gross received because they would not incur any costs of “going to a bowl”.

## V. DISCUSSION

1. Starting the New BCS allows for 12 Saturday dates for the regular season (see Date Schedule). This would equate to the number of games played by most of the FBS teams BEFORE a bowl game is played. There are a few teams that do play 13 games due to conference championships.
2. Universities desirous of seriously being considered by the New BCS selection committee should consider their 12 game regular season opponents carefully. However, teams that do not receive an invitation to the New BCS, can schedule intra-state or rivalry games with more flexibility. I see no reason why contingency games “if we don’t make the New BCS, we’re going to play so-and-so”. If 48 teams are invited to the New BCS, that leaves 72 teams potentially looking for a game. Technology allows for contingency ticket sales, travel and lodging. The Top 48 is published and available during the season for all football programs to be able to plan for this contingency, some earlier than others.
3. The structure of the New BCS will require the non-bye teams to potentially play 18 games to win a national championship, if they elect to schedule 12 games in their regular season. More than likely, the championship will be played by two of the bye teams, which will require them to potentially play 17 games for them to win a national championship. This is three more than they play currently (including a bowl game). Of course this only affects two of the 120 NCAA Division I teams. Continuing with this thought, only 4 teams are guaranteed to play two more games than they currently play. Extending the season is no doubt the largest hurdle of this plan. However, it should be noted that even though most teams stop the “regular season” around Thanksgiving and don’t play another game until late December or early January, the players are still hitting each other. There are those that would argue that a long lay-off not only creates the potential for “rusty” play, but also the potential for serious injury to players due to a lack of intensity during the lay-off. The college athlete of today is not the athlete of yesterday. Historically, seasons have gotten longer as the athlete has evolved.
4. For all but 8 teams, the season is over on the second Saturday of December, providing time for the student athlete to focus and get their studies in order before the next semester begins.
5. Even though this plan potentially requires more games, there are more days between most rounds than the athlete has during the regular season and almost over two weeks before they would play their 15th game on December 25th. The format can almost be looked at as though there is a mini 3-game post season for 8 teams.
6. I have also come up with shortening the regular season by one game and starting the tournament the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This would reduce the potential of games required down to 16 (for bye teams) to win the national championship.

7. The reward for the first 16 teams is a bye, but the second 16 are rewarded with a home game. This establishes new goals within individual football programs.
8. This plan opens the BCS to all 120 NCAA Division I universities. This plan provides the framework for more parity and an equalization of revenues, **WITHOUT REDUCING THE CURRENT BCS BOWL ELIGIBLE CONFERENCE'S REVENUE**. The current financial disparity between "automatically qualified" and "non automatically qualified" BCS universities is unfair. This plan can enhance the revenues for all non-BCS bowls without affecting the BCS bowl revenue streams. It is my contention that even the BCS revenues will increase as more of the population participates in "bracketology". There are those that will only follow the championship, but I contend that these would constitute a new fan base.
9. From a recruiting standpoint, which is better, a coach that had a 6-6 record touting to his recruit that we went "bowling" (to a lesser bowl) or "we now have the chance to play for the National Championship"? I can see the smiles on hundreds of recruits' faces. The athlete wants to play on national TV, on a national platform, and this play-off plan provides all programs that opportunity.
10. This plan attempts to maintain tradition. The Rose Bowl and the Orange Bowl will be played every January 1st. In my opinion, this is the way it should be. The pageantry that accompanies both bowls remains intact. Christmas day used to be a big college bowl day and this plan re-establishes this tradition (move over NBA). The Fiesta Bowl and the Sugar Bowl will always be played on Christmas Day. The Capital One, the Outback, the Holiday, the Cotton, the Champs Sports, and the Gator bowls may agree to rotate for Christmas Day dates much like the "big four" do for the national championship.
11. The plan creates new tradition. The day after Thanksgiving would now belong to college football like it has never before. The benefit of hosting a first round game would make the second tier (17 through 32) a highly sought after goal. It is no longer the "Top 25" but rather the "Top 48" in three tiers that command the fan's attention. The Top 48 will only increase the importance and interest level of the regular season.
12. The enticement of smaller universities playing "the big school" is greatly reduced because of more parity and opportunity. Appalachian State versus Michigan is a great story and is not to be short-changed, but I for one would give up games like that to have the benefit of seeing games that the enclosed play-off structure would bring. Notice what some of those early match-ups would have been. In the second round Penn State gets a rematch with Iowa, Northwestern versus Oregon (Big 10 versus Pac 10), and Pittsburgh versus Cincinnati, to name a few. Anyone looking at the 2008 Mock Up Bracket has got to be excited at what this play-off format will bring in the future.

13. The other existing bowls gain significant more prestige and importance by hosting games that lead to the “Final Four” and the ultimate National Championship. The bowls argue that they are not just a game, but rather an event. I believe this structure allows for bowls to plan their event in exactly the same fashion that they currently enjoy. It may even be easier as the play-off format requires consistent dates from year-to-year.

14. The quality of the “match-ups” at each game is greatly increased. Imagine some of the match-ups not only during the early rounds but as the tournament progresses. The importance of the traveling fan base of each school is not to be overlooked but from a purely financial standpoint, is diminished and replaced by other revenues. The bowls currently bring in important “foreign” dollars into the 29 communities. Now local businesses can sponsor corporate events at the smaller bowls with a great deal of certainty that a high quality match-up will occur not just regionally selected teams based upon how well their fan base travels. In my 2008 Mock Up bracket, I do not see a “poor” or “ho hum” game.

15. It is not the intent of this plan to under value what college football means to hundreds of thousands of fans but for any play-off plan to have any chance of materializing, the financial considerations must be addressed and at least maintained, if not, enhanced.

16. An argument can be made that more revenue from this format COULD transcend from football into other NCAA sports, bringing even more parity to sports like men’s and women’s basketball. Some of this additional revenue could even be earmarked for academic scholarships as well.

17. Some traditionalists have argued that the regular season is actually a play-off. Webster defines a play-off as “a series of games, as between the leading teams of two leagues, that play in order to decide a championship”. Regular season games do not qualify as a play-off. The Bowl Championship Series is advertised as a national championship series, which is not accurate.

18. There also exists the possibility of an “NIT Tournament” or similar at the end of the regular season for teams bubbling under the Top 48. This would add the opportunity for more student athletes to experience of “post season” play and an additional revenue generating opportunity for the NCAA and those that would host those games.

19. This is a true championship format and does not reward mediocre performance during the regular season. The argument that the regular season is not important is not viable. With this new format, one loss does not rule out a team's chances at winning the national championship. A case in point would be last year's USC team that got beat in mid-season. That loss pretty much negated any chances that USC would play for the national championship. How much more meaningful would USC's or any other one loss team's regular season be knowing that attaining the national championship is not over with one loss or even two. Let's include Utah in the discussion. Utah would have gotten even more attention because of their opportunity to win the championship on the field of play. A play-off creates more interest in the regular season, not less.

20. I consider myself a traditionalist. I didn't want a DH, or wildcards, extra divisions, or inter-league play, but in every case, I was wrong. Without question, each change created more interest and excitement.

21. The current BCS has been in existence for over 10 years now and if it were to be "shelved" it would not take long for "things to get back to normal". My plan does not destroy the bowl system, I believe if this plan does not work, it too would not take things long to get back to normal.

22. The NCAA March Madness selection show received a 4.3/18 Nielsen Rating in 2009. I am not sure how much money that show generates for the NCAA, but add this new revenue opportunity to the overall pot.

23. The 2009 Nielsen Ratings for CBS during the first 8 days of the March Madness tournament were 5.9. The men's national championship received a 17.2 rating. Compare that to the FBS national championship's rating of 26.767 one can easily see that the first rounds of my play-off plan will generate at least two or three times what the first and second tier bowl games generate. Adding two or three times the TV revenue to the overall revenue is not a bad thing.

24. Lastly, the athletes believe the student athletes will embrace this format, especially those athletes at the 51 universities that currently do not have a feasible chance of winning a national championship. The athletes that I have had the opportunity to speak with "hate" the lay-off between the regular season and their bowl game. There is excitement in looking towards their bowl game, but it is difficult staying sharp and in tune. I think this format provides them, all of them, the opportunity to do their best on an even playing field, which is what the NCAA should be all about. The financial side of things has impeded the opportunity for "fair play". It is time for change.

## **VI. SUMMARY**

This came about because I selfishly desire to have an undisputed National Champion, crowned each year. With all due respect given to the current participants, it is just not right that arguably the most watched sport the NCAA has to offer is the only one that does not have a play-off to determine its champion. The NCAA does sanction 88 other national championships, a system must be developed to crown an undisputed champion.

The information contained herein is believed to be accurate and reliable. I am in no way representing myself as some “guru” of the sport, just a fan.... By the way, the 2008 Mock-up Bracket assumed that there would be no upsets. The only match up that actually occurred last year was the Number 1 Oklahoma Sooners versus the Number 2 Florida Gators and we all know that Number Two beat Number One. It is my contention that numerous upsets would have taken place and would have only supported this New BCS system.

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