

BCS

-Matt Lieberson

This past Sunday, the BCS announced the National Title Game on January 9th in the Superdome would be LSU-Alabama II. Many college football fans were clamoring for a new opponent to step up to take on the Tigers, specifically Oklahoma State. But the BCS computers spoke, and they came to the consensus that Alabama, despite their prior loss to LSU, was the better football team and was more deserving of getting a title shot.

The issue isn't the decision itself. Looking at Alabama's body of work, they had an unbelievable year. They had the out-of-conference resume that Oklahoma State didn't, with their victory in Happy Valley over Penn State. The issue, though, is the fact that it was up to computers to make this decision. The BCS has always been the most maligned system of playoffs in sports, and not without good reason. In 2001, Miami got skipped over by Florida State, even though they had the same record and Miami had already beaten Florida State. In 2004, 3 teams (LSU, Oklahoma, and USC) were all 12-1 going into the bowl selection. This was before the National Title system, so the Sugar Bowl was the de facto title game. USC was the odd team out, and after their victory over Michigan in the Rose Bowl and LSU's win over Oklahoma in the Sugar Bowl, the polls were split over a champion between LSU and USC. With so many difficult decisions that aren't up to teams to play and decide, it is finally time to move away from the BCS system.

The BCS is a system that is inherently flawed. First off, there are things that computers can't keep track of. Oklahoma State's loss came the night after the school lost 2 women's basketball coaches in a plane crash. They still lost in double OT. There are circumstances that have a human element. Second, it doesn't leave a major part of the postseason up to the players. Part of the reason March Madness is so exciting is due to all of the upsets. With the BCS in place, no intrigue is involved in who will play in the national title game. In some years, there is a clear-cut top two teams that deserve to play. Last year, Auburn and Oregon were the two undefeated teams who deserved a national title shot. But in other instances, there is no clear top two teams, and the best way to determine the champion would be playing out more games.

Now, I'm not in favor of a full 8-team playoff. There are rarely 8 college football teams deserving of national title shots. Personally, I like a four team plus-one system. In this system, four teams would play in BCS bowls, #1 vs. #4 and #2 vs. #3. The following weekend, the winners of each of those games would play each other. This is a sort of compromise with a BCS system, as it allows more teams a shot at a national title. Looking specifically at this year, this plus-one idea is especially intriguing. The games would shake out to be LSU vs. Stanford, and Oklahoma State vs. Alabama. We could see how Andrew Luck stacks up against LSU's vaunted defense, as well as Brandon Weeden of Oklahoma State against Alabama's traditional powerhouse defense. This potential system allows for the best teams in the country to control their own destiny.

But, instead, we are stuck with our current system. The SEC fans are jumping with joy, as they get their SEC teams in a SEC-located title game. The rest of the nation, though, isn't so pleased. Maybe, sooner or later, college football will get it right.

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