

A week before Auburn vs Oregon came down to the final play we made the inquiries. Could TCU play the winner of Auburn vs Oregon ? TCU had only played 13 games. Oregon would only have played 13 games. Auburn, 14 games. If Oregon won , would it be possible to play TCU as their 14th game ?

The schools, on an off the record basis, were not opposed to it. They didn't come out and agree to it, but they certainly were not opposed to the idea. The problem ? It wasn't money. The problem was that when we asked anyone who could know whether or not the NCAA would approve another game , a +plus one playoff game, the response was unanimous , and I'm paraphrasing here "There is no way in hell the NCAA would approve a +1 playoff game between any two teams . There is no way TCU vs anyone could happen"

Hey. We asked.

We projected that there would be about \$50mm available to the schools. But it wasn't a question of money. It was a question of yes or no from the NCAA. We decided it was better not to actually pop the question to the NCAA. We decided to rethink the question of whether or not there should be a BCS playoff.

The first step in rethinking the process is to first work from the most likely premise and try to adapt it to the goal. So we started with a simple perspective: "What if the current BCS system is a good system and the only system available to determine which two teams should play for the national championship ?".

To some, this may be a non-starter. They believe that the BCS is so flawed and incapable of crowning a true national champion that it's not worthy of consideration. **I disagree. When you look at the system, the current BCS system it is actually a very, very good starting point for determining a national champion.** It is not perfect. It is far from perfect from a financial perspective. It leaves a lot of money on the table. But maximizing revenue is not a stated goal of the BCS system. So you can't really blame them for that.

The BCS system actually reaches quite a few of its goals. It retains tradition. It makes every game of the regular season important. It retains some semblance of normality for student athletes schedules and it allows them to enjoy the unique experiences of the bowl system – a week in a cool location with family, friends, fans and teammates. You may argue about these goals, but the current system gets there from here.

**The one goal that is not arguable is that the best two teams are always in the BCS Championship game. Even the staunchest BCS supporter will tell you that every year there are going to be disappointed teams and fans who feel that the only barrier between their team and a National Championship is the lack of a true playoff.**

So I set off to think about whether or not there is a way to work within the current BCS system to optimize the likelihood that the last two teams playing were the two best teams.

In technology there is the very simple principle of GIGO. No matter what the algorithm, if the data going in is incomplete or misapplied then the results will be less than optimal or just plain wrong.

The problem with the BCS is that the data going into the system is bad. I'm not talking about the polls. Yes we can argue about the polls the BCS uses and their problems of which they are many. But no polling or ranking system, whether built on votes or on technical analysis is going to be anywhere near perfect. (And for the record, in FOOTBALL the margin of victory weighted and re-weighted for the quality of the competition should be a factor in ranking teams )

**The biggest problem with the BCS system is that there are no parameters or constraints on who BCS eligible teams schedule. Pretty much every BCS eligible school tries their best to game the system to put themselves in the best position to qualify for a bowl and to go undefeated. Put another way, almost every school schedules at least 2, if not 3 "cupcakes" every year. There in lies the rub of the BCS system. Cupcakes distort the system. Rather than playing games that could further contract the number of teams in the championship hunt, these games increase the number. GIGO.**

The way to fix the system is to replace the cupcakes with a mid-season playoff system .

The first question in replacing cupcake games with BCS impactful is to ask whether or not teams can change their game schedules, many of which are planned years in advance. In the words of an AD "changing games is a lot easier than you think". Particularly when you realize that the cupcakes take on the role of sacrificial lamb purely for the money. It would be relatively easy to buy out the cupcakes.

Then there is also the consideration that the cupcakes are scheduled so that schools can become bowl eligible. Bowl eligibility is not just about the experience, but also about the bonuses. Get to a bowl. Get paid. Nothing wrong with that. But in order for some to consider making their schedules more difficult they are going to want to have their bowl bonuses covered. We can do that as part of this new approach.

With those little inhibitors eliminated the question becomes "what is the optimal approach to an in season tournament" ?

I don't have the perfect solution, which is why I wanted to throw it out for people to discuss on <http://www.facebook.com/pages/HDNet-CFB-Playoff-Series/171212686252635>

My first thought on this is that we ask the BCS to require any school that would like to be considered for the BCS championship game to be leave as open dates on their schedule the 6th , 7th and 8th weeks of the season. Then we take the published BCS rankings and we "playoff " zero loss teams against each other. We do the same with 1 loss teams, 2 loss teams, etc. So the best undefeated teams play each other in a 3 game playoff. In the event there are an uneven number of undefeated teams, we take the highest ranking one loss team (s). You do the same all the way down the line.

In the first round the highest ranked undefeated team plays the lowest ranked. The teams are then re ranked after the results of the first games. Then we do the same thing all over again. Formerly undefeated teams are placed in the 1 loss 'division' , 2 losses in the 2 loss division, only this time there is one huge change. Starting with the 2nd round, each team plays the team ranked directly below them . So 1 plays 2. 3 plays 4. 5 plays 6, all the way through however many eligible teams are participating. Then we do the same thing all over again in the 3rd week.

By the end of these 3 weeks the number of undefeated teams are reduced, and there is the real possibility that there are no undefeated teams left. Any and every Non AQ undefeated team is going to get their chance. We will have had some amazing matchups between conferences and probably even intra conference. And on the bottom of the heap, every winless team is going to face another winless or at worst a very poor team and have a chance to get on the board with a

win. More importantly, the rankings in the BCS system will now reflect the results of games designed to be competitive. By the end of the season, the likelihood that they two best teams are competing in the championship game has increased substantially.

What about the money ? How much do you think the value of these games will increase for current TV partners ? Auburn vs TCU as the 7th game of the season vs Auburn vs Chattanooga ? How much will sponsors pay to brand this tournament ? How much more excited will fans be ? Of course there is the issue of who gets the home game in this series, that can be handled via a flip of a coin. And there is the costs associated with uncertain travel expenses, which can easily be picked up via sponsorship and increased TV revenues.

And what about the Bowl Games ? They can continue on as they always have, BUT, they have the opportunity to create "re-matches". If Boise State knocked Penn State from the ranks of the undefeated in the first match-up game, but both ended up with 2 or 3 losses, why not a re-match ? In addition, if there is a Cinderella team(s) from the tournament, they now have a much higher national profile which in turn will make the bowl game they are involved in much more attractive.

What does everyone think ? I'm not saying this is a perfect solution. That doesn't exist. Even in a playoff system, someone will always be disappointed. But I do think that this works within the current system in a manner that is completely in control of school ADs who do the scheduling and works within the guidelines set by the BCS and the NCAA (as far as I could tell in a first pass look), and results in a far better chance of the BCS Championship game hosting the two best teams.

How can I make this approach better ?