'If you can't get rid of the skeleton in your closet, you'd best teach it to dance.'

– George Bernard Shaw

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December Madness a possibility

By **GREG DASSELL**
Staff Writer
gdassell@ius.edu

Pop quiz, who can tell me what formula is used in association with the BCS rankings? And the bonus question, why isn't there a playoff system in college football?

Well, we're waiting. All right, the truth is I don't know either. What I can tell you is that there are six different computer ranking systems used, and the highest and lowest scores of those are thrown out. Then you average in the Harris Interactive Poll and the USA Today Coaches Poll, mix it all together, bake at 425 degrees for 12 minutes and out comes your rankings that determine who plays for the national championship of college football.

Seriously, go to a BCS rankings Web site and look up any one of the six computer rankings methods. My head exploded within two seconds of the page coming up. Yes, I can understand basic concepts like strength of schedule, wins on the road versus wins at home, margin of victory and so on. But why should I have to?

There are 32 bowl games scheduled for this year. At two teams per bowl game, that puts us at 64 teams. Hmm? That number seems vaguely familiar to me. Oh yes, it is the same number of teams that play for the national championship in basketball every year, give or take a play-in game.

There are a lot of reasons given for not having a playoff system. There is the traditional argument that the holiday season would not be the same without four weeks of bowl games. Uh, yes it would. In fact, it would be better.

With teams switching conferences and BCS Bowl games diverting some of the traditional match-ups you would see in the bowl games, who cares anyway? And who has already made vacation plans to head to Albuquerque, N.M. to see the third place WAC representative play the fourth place MWC representative in the New Mexico Bowl? The anticipation is killing me.

Another popular argument is that a playoff system would interfere with the studies of the student athlete during finals. I am a big proponent of students actually graduating from college, especially those that are getting a free ride to do so. But this argument is thin. The NCAA basketball tournament is played right before finals in the spring, and no one is complaining about that. Besides, under my playoff system all games are played on Saturday, so there would be no more pressure to get school work done than during any other week of the regular season.

The real reason there isn't a playoff in place already is money. This one is not so easy to dismiss. Each team making it to a BCS Bowl game is awarded $17 million. Those conferences with BCS tie-ins such as the SEC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac-10, ACC, Big East and the University of Notre Dame don't want to give up that money. It is hard to argue against that kind of money.

But I will anyway. The format is simple, and closely resembles NCAA March Madness. First, do away with all the conference championship games. You wouldn't need a conference championship game because both those teams will make the tournament anyway, and you clear away one less game. Then seed the top 64 teams, have a play-in game if you want to have 65 like basketball. Teams would be seeded 1-16 in four regions across the country.

Rankings throughout the year will work like this. There will be two polls, a coaches poll and a media poll. Then there will be a selection committee to actually seed the tournament, and all the computers will be blown up.

December Madness will last for five weeks. If all the teams gave up one or two cream-puffs a year on their schedules, my system could start the first weekend in December and end the first week of January. There would be 32 games played on that first weekend. Whoever is the higher seed plays at home.

The playoffs would proceed just like the basketball tournament, with the exception that the higher seeded team would play at home and you wouldn't play every other day, until you were down to two teams. The championship game would be played at a neutral site. They can even rotate the location of the championship game just as they do under the current format.

There would have to be some sort of negotiations with the networks to get the money dispersed progressively as teams advanced through the tournament. I'm neither an accountant, nor a lawyer, so I have no idea how to make that a reality. But the sponsors of bowls, as well as many other corporate sponsors, would be lining up to pay the networks for advertising time in December Madness.

At the very least, we would have a true national champion. No more teams crying about how unfair the system is. No more decisions to make about which two of the five undefeated teams will play for the national championship. Or, more likely, no more decisions about which two teams to take out of the six or seven one-loss teams.

Now, give yourself an A+, and take the rest of the day off.