

Bowling

12-10-2013

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Recommended Citation

Crepeau, Richard C., "Bowling" (2013). *On Sport and Society*. 73.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/onsportandsociety/73>

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
December 10, 2013

Here it is only two days after the bowl pairings were announced and I am already approaching that semi-nauseous state of bowl fatigue. There once was a time not so long ago when that feeling didn't set in until the second-half of the final game on January 1. Oh, for the good old days.

Today I "hit the wall" simply by reading the NCAA's schedule of bowl games. It was somewhere between bowl 23 and bowl 26 that my mouth began to dry and become cottony and my bowels began growling in that oh so dangerous sort of way.

Take this as a warning. Do not attempt to read the entire list of thirty-five games in one sitting. Also do not try to deal with such issues as: "What the hell are they doing in a bowl game?" or "I have never heard of that place," which could be applied to a school, a bowl title and/or a location.

The games will be coming fast and furious beginning December 21, the Winter Solstice. ESPN and ABC, the twin towers of televised sports, will offer up four bowl games for our viewing displeasure as they endeavor to turn the shortest day of the year into the longest day of the year.

It all starts with the New Mexico Bowl which at least for this year is being played in New Mexico. Two teams will meet and one will win. Some people will be happy and others will be sad. You remember "the joy of victory and the agony of defeat." For many but the hardiest of fans it will simply be the numbness of indifference.

Next on the tube will be a trifecta featuring the Las Vegas Bowl, the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, and the New Orleans Bowl. Be forewarned, the not so famous Potato Bowl will be played in Boise, where the ugly bluish field will fill your flat screen and make strength of stomach more important than strength of schedule. It will be Buffalo against San Diego with the Chargers an early six-and-a-half point favorite. Six other teams will be playing in the other three bowls that day. None of them will feature a potato mashing.

After the four bowl solstice there will be a day off for recovery from the excitement. It will also give you a chance to get the smell of stale beer and used pizza out of your TV room. (A tip for novices: you can avoid this issue as the bowl gods a few years ago created the sports bar, a must for any four bowl day)

On December 23 the schedule picks up with the Beef 'O'Brady's Bowl in St. Petersburg as a kick-off for the Winter Olympics, which will take place a thousand or so miles to the south, in Sochi. Vladimir Putin promises to be there, shirtless, providing the beef, while fulfilling his role as the world's leading heterosexual.

Christmas Eve the boys of Boise State, having fled Boise with their incredibly famous potatoes, will be in Hawaii where the field is not blue. Unfortunately their opponents will bring another version of color coordinated obtuseness to the Hawaii Bowl. Think, Lime Punch.

Christmas Day will offer another bowl break. On that day you can overdose on the Little Drummer Boy, heavy food, Egg Nog, and the NBA. Then its back to the heavy lifting, with nine bowls crammed into the next three days. Over this span of the bowl bonanza Buffalo Wild Wings and Little Caesars will fight hunger with Kraft, while wearing Russell Pinstripe Athletic Wear with a touch of military garlands topped off with a Texan hat from Belk's.

Then comes another day off to sort all those bowls out, and steel your constitution for the next three days featuring thirteen bowls. This might look like the big finish, but it isn't. This cluster of monumental clashes starts with the Armed Forces Bowl which will actually have one team from the Armed Forces participating in this traditional contest.

The first game of New Year's Eve is the mystery bowl of the year, the AdvoCare V100 Bowl in Shreveport, Louisiana. You can always count on Shreveport to come up with some strange name, although they will never top everyone's all-time favorite, The Poulan Weed-Eater Bowl, first played in Shreveport in 1990. V100 seems to be an upgrade from V8, the granddaddy of all the multi-veggie juices that graced America's table well before vegans began their quest for purity of essence.

I must confess to a special fondness for the Poinsettia Bowl because of its seasonal reference, although I have long felt this should be two bowls, one for each pronunciation of "Poinsettia."

Another newcomer to the bowl scene and opening on the once prestigious New Year's Day is the Heart of Dallas Bowl that may seem more like a statement about the city than a bowl brand. And yes it will be played in Dallas, not in the Jerry Dome in Arlington, which has vacuumed up most of the major sports events in the Lone Star State.

The more traditional bowls like the Cotton, Orange and Sugar have moved on to January 2 and 3. That of course is keeping with another set of traditions involving the bowls: television and money.

The final act will be the BCS National Championship Game on January 6 played in the Rose Bowl. Don't be confused as this is not *the* Rose Bowl, which will have already been played on January 1.

Before that big game, which considerable numbers of people will actually be interested in and watch, there will be two other bowls. For those who have lost their way, the January 4 Compass Bowl, arrives just in the nick of time to help you find your way to a TV set for Big Game on January 6. Then, so no one will suffer from withdrawal, there will be a game on January 5. The GoDaddy Bowl will be a tribute to all those in the previous 33 bowl games who have already learned the answer to the question, "who's your Daddy."

Ladies and Gentlemen, Tap Your Kegs.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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