

Bowling

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR ARETE
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Every few years I like to take inventory of the Bowl Games. Each football season concludes with these loss leaders for intercollegiate football teams. Almost without exception teams who have been honored with an invitation to a bowl game will lose money with the cost of bowling exceeding the payouts for bowlers. The theory is that the exposure is worth more than real budgetary dollars.

Each year more and more teams join the "select many" that are so honored because each year sees more and more bowl games blotting the landscape. It is nearly impossible for anyone to turn down an invitation to one of these events because the "prestige" (translate TV time) emanating from even the most obscure bowl, is too marvelous to reject.

No matter the cost. Any university seems more than happy to spent a million dollars or more, to be seen on TV even if it is not on January 1. The money would be better spent by buying thirty minutes on regional cable networks to advertise the school as a place that has leadership smart enough not to drop a million dollars down the toilet bowl.

There will be thirty-eight bowl games this year plus the national championship game. This means that seventy-six football teams will get their three hours of glory on cable on a weeknight, most of them in the shadow of a major holiday. As many as thirty-eight teams could be humiliated in obscurity (the upside of the equation) while thirty-eight other teams could bask in the glory at the Raycom Media Camellia Bowl, one of the five games that will kickoff the bowl season on Saturday. There is nothing that says "media exposure" like a football game in late December in Montgomery, Alabama.

Four additional bowls will be held Saturday: The R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl, the Gildan New Mexico Bowl, the Royal Purple Las Vegas Bowl, and the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl in Boise. These bowls raise a number of issues and questions. What is a Gildan? How often is the term "Royal Purple" and Las Vegas seen in the same sentence? What exactly are R+L carrying? And can anyone watch an entire game from Boise on the nauseating blue carpet without up-chucking those Famous Potatoes?

After this brutal first day fans get a day off before the Miami Beach Bowl played in Marlins Park in the shadow of the "Big Chalupa," that wild contraption featuring a pink flamingo and other assorted items of varied bright colors. I am not sure if it will go into action after a touchdown, but one can hope. This is the stuff of legend and memory.

Two more games will be held on the 23rd of December. The Boca Raton Bowl on the east coast will be followed on the west coast by the San Diego Country Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl, which may have the longest name of any of the bowls. Over the years it has, for reasons unknown, produced some exciting wild offensive football games.

For those who like their Christmas Eve filled with pigskin two marvelous holiday locations are on offer. The Sheraton Aloha Bowl in Hawaii has been around for some time and can put a major dent in the budgets of those teams "lucky" enough to be summoned to the Pacific. For those who prefer Christmas Eve further to the east yet still on an island, there is the inaugural Popeyes Bahamas Bowl available in traditional spicy or mild. Who could possibly resist New Orleans style chicken in the Bahamas on Christmas Eve? It sounds like the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

The day after Christmas there are three more bowls starting a run of eight bowls over two days. Some great names are to be found in this array of gridiron glory. Among my favorites are the linguistically challenging Quick Lane Bowl, and the Bitcoin St. Petersburg Bowl. Given the current economic conditions in St. Petersburg the Bitcoin may offer a viable alternative to the ruble. The Military Bowl in Annapolis will not feature any of the service teams, while the Duck Commander Independence Bowl in Shreveport will not quite reach the legendary status achieved by The Poulan Weed-Eater Bowl. It does however raise the question, "What the hell is a Duck Commander?"

The year ends with nine bowls in three days. The Peach and Orange will open the fruit themed bowls. The Foster Farms Bowl evokes the odd image of a plea to adopt a farm. Who knows what the AdvoCare Texas Bowl might be, although it can be presumed that it will be in Texas, and that means it will be overblown and overdone. The Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl in Nashville on the 30th of December may in fact successfully challenge for the bowl

with the longest name. It will also Notre Dame to showcase their disappointing season.

That takes us to New Years Day when five bowls will vie for your attention, but only two will really be of national interest. Those of course are the Rose Bowl and the Sugar Bowl where four teams chosen by a committee will play round one of the National Championship Tournament. Two meaningful games on New Years Day is a welcome whiff of nostalgia for those who remember when the four bowl games on that day were the only bowls that counted, and could keep you tied to your television for the entire hung over day.

Bowl withdrawal is addressed on January 2nd with only four games on offer. The Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl will not host a service team in Fort Worth. And who knew that Tempe, Arizona is Ticket City? And in what may be the best named bowl in the most appropriate venue, Jacksonville will be the location of the TaxSlayer Bowl in EverBank Field. This can only be a tribute to the American Banking industry and its highly developed tax evasion skill set.

One bowl game each on the 3rd and 4th of January will complete the withdrawal process. You will then have eight days to rest up for the National Championship Game in the House that Jerry Built ending the excess of the college football season in a building than defines it.

More is never enough.

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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