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The Ten Days of Christmas: TV Sports

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The Twelve Days of Christmas we don't have, but we do have ten days of Christmas from December 25 through January 3 during which television offers a mind-boggling array of football, basketball (professional and college), and hockey. Sports television in the late 20th century may have spawned an entirely new concept of the days of Christmas.

On the first day of Christmas, today, my TV gives to me, one bowl game, the Blue-Gray Game, two NBA tilts, and not a single college basketball game.

The bowl game is the Aloha Bowl from Honolulu where Kansas and Brigham Young play each other at 9:30 a.m. local time, that's 3:30 in the east for all you TV fans. What a way to start your Christmas morning. Gee coach can we open our presents? Are you kidding. Get out there and kick some Christmas butt. This seems to be a steep price to pay for Christmas in Hawaii, even if you are from Kansas or Utah.

On the second day of Christmas my TV gives to me two NFL games, two NBA games including the Magic, two college hockey games, and a fistful of college basketball games.

On the third day of Christmas my TV gives to me four NFL games, and a fistful of college basketball games. Among the NFL games on this closing Sunday of the regular season are the Bucs' last gasp, and a Sunday night thriller with Buffalo at Houston.

On the fourth day of Christmas my TV gives to me the final game of the NFL regular season, and a fistful of college basketball games.

On the fifth day of Christmas my TV gives to me two bowl games and a fistful of college basketball games. The bowl games are a pair of "who beyond immediate family and alumni really cares" specials. The Copper Bowl (does anyone out there know where this is played?) will match Washington State, who limped to the finish line of the regular season, against Utah, which is best known for not being BYU. The Freedom Bowl, played in that cradle of freedom, Anaheim, California, adjacent to Disneyland, has USC playing Fresno State in a Mickey Mouse special.

On the sixth day of Christmas my TV gives to me one bowl game, the Magic against the Lakers, and a fistful of college

basketball games. In the Holiday Bowl that traditional rivalry between Hawaii and Illinois will be renewed for the first or second time, and the Big Ten will show once again why they need to become the Big Eleven. As to college basketball, if by this point you haven't overdosed on Dick Vitale, you must be using the mute button.

On the seventh day of Christmas my TV gives to me four bowl games, one Lightning game, and a handful of college basketball games. It is in fact New Year's Eve, which all Americans know is the time for the Revolutionary Triptych: the Independence Bowl, the John Hancock Bowl, and the Liberty Bowl. At the aptly named Gator Bowl the Florida Gators will be trying to prove conclusively that they didn't belong in the Sugar Bowl. Can you name the cities in which these games are played? Do you care? ESPN, TBS, and CBS does.

Then comes the eighth day of Christmas when my TV goes berserk offering eight bowl games, several simultaneously, no pro basketball, no hockey games, and not a single college basketball game. At least live. Can you even name all the bowl games on New Year's Day? You will be excused if you can not, especially those early games which kickoff before your head has cleared from the parties the night before. So here they come in the order in which they are played: Hall of Fame, Cotton, Citrus, Blockbuster, Fiesta, Rose, Orange, and Sugar. The only one of these games that anyone really cares much about is the Sugar Bowl, the game that will decide who is number one, sort of. And as you know everyone in the universe is obsessed by the desire to know who number one is. By late January this pressing issue will be largely forgotten.

On the ninth day of Christmas my TV gives to me one bowl game, one Magic game, two NFL play-off games, and fistful of college basketball games. The Peach Bowl will provide the long awaited North Carolina-Mississippi State game before which Jackie Sherill will castrate a Tar Heel, which will offend Jessie Helms and cause all funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to Mississippi to be cut off. This will save the government in excess of \$150. No one will notice any of this because on the eighth day of Christmas who is number one was already determined. Dick Vitale will return with a vengeance having had two days off. Have your ear plugs or your mute button ready.

On the tenth day of Christmas my TV will give to me no bowl games, two NFL playoff games, a pro basketball game, and a fistful of college basketball games. At this point the TV will

either have burned up several chips or totally turned you into a vegetable. Whichever it is, you can only give thanks that the TV Days of Christmas are now over.

If you have been counting you know there have been seventeen bowl games, 11 NFL games, three Magic games, three other NBA games, one Lightning game, a few college hockey games, and a small mountain of college basketball games. If you have survived this blitz of blather you need to contact your family physician.

Aren't you glad Christmas comes but once a year?

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

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