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Bowls Everywhere But None to Match the Poulan Weed Eater Bowl

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SPORT AND SOCIETY FOR H-ARETE
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I entered a state of deep depression recently when I learned that the folks at Poulan are no longer sponsoring the Independence Bowl. The Poulan Weed Eater Bowl is no more. The irritating, loud and stupid relative of all the bowl games is gone. The Poulan Weed Eater Bowl has whacked its last weed.

"Let's face it, there are much better times of the year to be promoting Weed Eater trimmers or Poulan chain saws than in December," said Glen Krupica, the executive director for the bowl, in a fit of realism.

The Poulan Weed Eater Bowl has been my favorite bowl name since it began sponsoring the Independence Bowl in 1991. So having been devastated by this news I went in search of new bowl names that might match the magic combination of banality and insidious stupidity once supplied by the folks at Poulan.

In this day and age such a quest for the Holy Grail must begin in cyberspace. Much to my delight my quest was both short-lived and revelatory. Faster than you can say "Yahoo" or "Search" an entire universe of bowl games jumped onto my computer screen. The revelation was almost as immediate. Bowl games have gone internet. There are "dot com" bowls proliferating like some hacker's virus.

The Poulan Weed Eater! Who needs it?

Right here in Orlando we have the OurHouse.Com Citrus Bowl. This should not be confused with the Outback Bowl, which was often mistakenly called the Outhouse Steakout Bowl as it was sponsored by the Outback Steak House. It by the way is now in Tampa where the local bowl was previously known as the Hall of Fame Bowl.

OurHouse.Com I am pleased to tell you is a Home Depot-like business only on-line. One of the more intriguing products is the "Leatherman Pocket Survival Tool" which is describe as "Like having a handyman in your pocket," evoking several interesting images and fantasies. It actually resembles a Swiss Pocketknife or Johnny Carson's old Christmas favorite "Dickie the Stick", as it will do nearly everything. It is, as they say, "A Y2K Must."

The Insight.Com Bowl in Tucson is a Computer Hardware and Software sponsored event. As with so many of the bowls Insight.Com has a number of subsidiary events. The most intriguing sounding is the U.S. Home Fiesta Bowl Middle School Spot Shot Shootout which is held in the University of Arizona "Bear Down Gym." There is no explanation of this event, so again use your imagination. I don't have a clue. You will not want to miss the Tucson Ford Dealer's Tailgate Party on game-day for only \$5 per person. The web site obligingly tells you more than you want to know about these fine car dealers in the Greater Tucson area.

Another highlight of the Insight.Com website is a listing, no pictures, of the Bowl Queen and her court including the first-runner-up and three princesses. Wouldn't you be proud to hear your daughter say, "I was an Insight.Com Princess"?

The Homepoint.Com Music City Bowl which should not be confused with the Motor City Bowl, even though the Motor City produces a lot of good music, is presented by a home furnishings and accessories company. Specials on lamps, tables and desks are available at the web site. The Homepoint.Com Bowl will feature a three day "Celebration of the Century" presented by the Nashville Sports Council and Gaylord Corporation. Bigger Bowls celebrate the Millennium.

The Crucial.Com Humanitarian Bowl like many other bowls has a mission statement. It "encourages athletes who participate in all sports to go 'beyond the game,' to use the skills and gifts they have been given to reach out to others, on and off the field." In that same spirit Crucial Technologies, a division of Micron, "also goes 'beyond the game' to bring customers the best quality and prices backed by extraordinary customer service and support." There is no mention if this is both on and off the field.

There is one other "Dot Com" Bowl, the Rivals.Com Hula Bowl. Rivals is "Your sports network," but unfortunately the web site was not functioning so I can tell you no more about this obviously important event.

When one gets into these web sites with the endless links to follow you quickly become aware of just how much sponsorship money is behind the bowl games. This is not so terribly surprising when dealing with the major bowls, but

even something as insignificant as the AXA Liberty Bowl in Memphis has sponsors coming out the ears. It claims to be "Celebrating 41 Years of Football and the Millennium," with the "Biggest Party in Town," an empty boast in Memphis.

AXA Equitable is the major sponsor but there are twenty-four corporate sponsors, and the website itself has an additional four sponsors. Indeed most websites have sponsors. All of this should tell you why there is no Division I football championship playoff system and there is not likely to ever be one.

As "Netrify-Network Systems that electrify your business"-a sponsor of the Liberty Bowl puts it "Our philosophy is that technology is the means to an end, not the end itself.."

If you're not certain by now what the "means" and "ends" are all you need do is head to the internet and visit some of those proliferating bowl sites.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau wishing you a Happy New Year and reminding you that you don't need to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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