

# 'Tis the Season for Bowling

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Every year at this time the college football world is blessed with a deluge of bowl games, and every year it is certain that there could not be any place in the United States that would seek to host a new bowl. Every year, of course, that certainty is smashed by the addition of yet more bowl games.

There are now 40 bowl games, involving 80 teams. There are 128 FBS teams in total which means that 62.5% of the teams playing intercollegiate football in the FBS division are playing in a bowl game. If your team is not in a bowl game the coach should be fired or congratulated for not losing more money for your athletics program.

It takes six wins for a team to qualify for a bowl game and the result this year is that there will be sixteen teams with a record of 6-6 going bowling, and a few of them will be playing each another. One team with six wins, Hawaii, will be bowling with seven losses. Two teams with five wins and seven losses have accepted invitations to play in bowls although they will not be playing one another. These two teams had to be added because there were not 80 teams meeting the criteria of six wins. Incompetence is not necessarily its own reward.

Fishing for, and in, new revenue streams is a primary qualification for the position of athletic director. As yet no athletic director has discovered the revenue possibilities of playing more than one bowl game. Certainly the top teams and conferences could go bowling for dollars more than once between

mid-December and mid-January. Analysts have often pointed out that the long layoff between the end of the regular season and the important bowl games leaves teams "rusty" and not at their best. Playing two bowl games, and collecting more money, would help alleviate this problem and further enrich the most powerful teams and conferences. What a concept!

The demographics of bowl games is another area for analysis. I am providing this as a service for all those people doing pre-bowl analysis for the sports networks, and for those bloggers who need filler. First, let's return to the observation that there may not be another place in the United States seeking to host a bowl game. The "Bahamas Bowl," the Grandbaby of all the bowl games, has appeared on the radar to solve that problem. Nassau, in the Bahamas, is not part of the United States although some spring breakers may think it is. It will play host to Old Dominion and Eastern Michigan, an attractive inter-conference game involving two teams with winning records.

With the Bahamas now hosting, the road is now clear to take the bowl bonanza around the globe. There is a growing interest in American football in many locations and this interest needs to be nurtured. Ireland has hosted regular season college football, surely the harbinger for the Shamrock Bowl. With the NFL playing games in Mexico it is well past time for "The Wall Bowl," and in London where the NFL has been so successful, "The Tea Bowl" at Wembley seems a natural. The possibilities seem endless. In addition it will give those two, three, four and five win teams an opportunity at bowling, not to mention the chance to lose even more money making a trip to a bowl game. It may be time to move the "Outback Bowl" to Australia.

Several states are hosting bowl games. Florida leads the way, hosting nine bowl games. This may seem problematic and suggest some unknown malady or virus is at work in the state. More likely of course is that there is an overabundance of chamber of commerce people who think that football games will bring more tourists to the state. These hyperactive football junkies may be right but I suspect that warm weather, beaches, and the capitalist rodent are more effective as tourist magnets than football.

There is a sharp drop off after Florida with Texas hosting only six bowl games. Next come California and Alabama with four bowls each on their seasonal calendar. Three bowls each are found in Louisiana, Arizona, and Tennessee. Ten other states and one foreign country host the remaining bowls.

It once was the case that warm weather was required to host a bowl game, but the coming of indoor football facilities have allowed Detroit and Boise into the bowl business. Where is your "Ice Bowl" Minnesota?

Whatever may be the case the city of Orlando seems to be the epicenter of the bowl binge. Orlando will host three bowl games: the "Russell Athletic Bowl," the "Citrus Bowl," and one new bowl. As a historical note I would point out that the Citrus Bowl was once known as the "Tangerine Bowl." The "Citrus Bowl" is no longer played in the Citrus Bowl but is now held in Camping World Stadium which, of course, is an upgraded version of the Citrus Bowl. I had hoped that the upgraded facility would be named in a nod to Prince, "Previous Football Facility known

as the Citrus Bowl." Apparently that name was rejected to avoid over-commercialization of intercollegiate athletics.

All of the three Orlando Bowl games are played in Camping World Stadium. The new Bowl, which will be played on the first day of bowl games, December 17, is the "Cure Bowl." I am not certain what is to be cured in this bowl, but I suspect it will not be meats.

The "Cure Bowl" may well be a cry for help from the city of Orlando seeking a cure for what is obviously a bowl addiction. The halftime show could feature a "Twelve-Step Plan" for kicking the bowl habit, offering needed assistance to bowl junkies. Many cities and states might benefit, as would the NCCA, the pusher that must approve all new bowls. Coming up next, the "Immunization Bowl."

The names of bowls have long been a point of interest. The now legendary "Poulon Weed-Eater Bowl" in Shreveport, Louisiana, was the most improbable and delightful name in the history of bowls. Other odd bowls include The "Salad Bowl" that had an eight-year run in Phoenix shortly after WWII, and the "Toilet Bowl" that was not a real bowl game but a name put on the Oregon-Oregon State game of 1983. It was the last scoreless tie at the FBS level. The name was posthumously awarded to the game and it has stuck. I seem to recall a "Toilet Bowl" from my youth but this is probably just a triumph of imagination over reality.

In the current bowl scene I would like to single out just a few for special mention. There are a cluster of bowls with a military flavor: The "Armed Forces Bowl," the "Military Bowl," and the "Dollar General Bowl." I assume the sponsor of the

latter bowl offers discounts on Generals with less than five stars, a commodity much in demand these days.

The "TaxSlayer Bowl" is also appropriate to the political world where not-paying taxes was claimed as evidence of being "smart" during the recent election season. The "Foster Farms Bowl" apparently encourages fans to adopt a farm. Also within the agricultural theme are the "Potato Bowl," the "Peach Bowl," the "Sugar Bowl," the "Orange Bowl," and the "Cotton Bowl." Closely related are the "Camelia Bowl," "Rose Bowl," "Cactus Bowl," and the "Poinsettia Bowl" featuring a disagreement over its proper pronunciation. The "Boca Raton Bowl" is the only bowl named for a part of the anatomy of a rodent.

And of course, who could possibly forget the "Alamo Bowl?"

So fasten your seat-belts and lay in the snacks and beer for the long haul, because on Saturday, December 17 the Bowl Marathon Challenge begins. Forty games in seventeen days; it has all of the earmarks of an Old Testament Plague.

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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