NCAA football playoff needed now more than ever

Ed DANIELS
SPORTS

The last weekend in November was a great one for college football.

In Baton Rouge, LSU bounced back from the Ole Miss loss with a 33-30 overtime win over Arkansas. Earlier Saturday, Mississippi State helped the Tigers' bowl prospects with a 41-27 upset of Ole Miss. Georgia upset Georgia Tech. Oklahoma won the Bedlam game, routing Oklahoma State, 27-0, and ending the Cowboys' hopes for a BCS bowl bid.

Too bad the party's over. It is time for the college football bowl season.

Please wait a second … while I yawn.

How does the loser of the SEC championship game, Florida vs. Alabama, somehow get excited about playing a New Year's Day bowl against say a Boise State?

I love the Sugar Bowl. I have been fortunate enough to attend about 35 Sugar Bowls in this lifetime, but ... the Sugar Bowl should be part of a playoff. Instead, when the bowl season kicks off, only four games will get my undivided attention.

The New Orleans Bowl and the Sugar Bowl are played in our city. I will likely attend LSU's bowl game. And, I will watch the BCS championship game.

The rest? Sorry, I love college football, and I just can't get into it. And neither can some of the teams.

Look at last season. After Alabama lost a great SEC title game to Florida, the Crimson Tide were as flat as a pancake in the Sugar Bowl against a Utah team with plenty to prove.

On New Year's Eve, LSU, smarting from three consecutive SEC West losses to end the season, rallied with an inspired performance against Georgia Tech in the Chick-Fil-A Bowl. Georgia Tech was supposed to have all the advantages. They were playing what amounted to a home game a stone's throw from campus. LSU won, 38-3, against a Tech team that, at least emotionally, failed to show up.

The dirty little secret about this game was Georgia Tech's bowl game was weeks earlier, when the Jackets beat archrival Georgia in Athens.

This season, Alabama and Florida have proven their mettle. But only one will survive to play for a title.

What should be happening is this: an eight-team playoff. One year, the Sugar Bowl would be a quarterfinal, and the next two years the Sugar would be a semifinal and the fourth year it would be the championship game.

Do TCU and Boise have the stuff to play against the big boys? It would be great to find out in a playoff, when their opponents would have as much to prove as the non-BCS qualifier.

This week, BCS guru Jerry Palm was asked about the possibility of a Bama/Florida rematch in the BCS championship game.

Said Jerry, "It would depend on the voters."

Gimme a break.

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CYO

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by tying Holy Cross, 0-0.

It seemed that every prep enthusiast in the city had demanded a second game. It was no contest this time.

Dominated by Jesuit and Holy Cross until the 1949 season, CYO officials were finding national opponents reluctant to travel to New Orleans for an annual defeat. They had to make a change. They turned the CYO Classic into a basketball tournament that matched the city's four large Catholic schools – Jesuit, Holy Cross, St. Aloysius and Redemptorist. The idea was that the winner would be declared the Catholic school basketball champion of New Orleans.

St. Aloysius won the first three (1950-52) and De La Salle, which had just joined the Prep League, won the next four (1953-56). Ironically, both were coached by the great Johnny Altobello. His De La Salle teams won two more, in 1958 and 1965.

The tournament was so successful that the organizers and the members of the newly-formed Catholic League agreed to continue the tournament in 1955 when the public and Catholic schools formed separate districts.

When the 2009 champion is decided on Dec. 5, that school will receive the Johnny Altobello Trophy, a legacy of the hall of fame coach who died at age 89 this year. His memory and career will be celebrated during the final games on Dec. 5.

Now in its 56th year, the AllState Sugar Bowl once again sponsors the CYO tournament, which began on Dec. 2. It will be played at four gyms.

Jesuit will host St. Paul's, Slidell and Ehret; Brother Martin will host St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and Holy Cross; Archbishop Rummel will host Country Day, St. Charles Catholic and Karr; and Archbishop Shaw will host Ellender, Hahnville and Higgins.

Game times are at 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

The semifinal and championship rounds on Dec. 4-5 will be played at Jesuit.

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Rummel, St. Charles Catholic a step away from state finals

By Ron Brocato
Clarion Herald

The football coaches at Archbishop Rummel and St. Charles Catholic are hoping to tell their fans, "We'll see you in the Superdome next weekend."

Both Archdiocese of New Orleans schools are one victory away from berths in the LHSAA's Prep Classic to be played in the Dome on Dec. 11-12.

But their semifinal round tasks are formidable.

Although ranked as the top seed in Class 5A, Rummel has had to clear some serious hurdles en route to its Dec. 4 semifinal round meeting with Westgate in New Iberia, including a rash of injuries to key players and an offense that struggled to score points.

But, behind a solid defense that has allowed just 8.3 points per game and the emergence of freshman sensation quarterback Damian Williams, the Raiders have yet to be beaten.

Last week they defeated No. 8 seed Hahnville, 24-7, to set up a semifinal round meeting with Westgate at 7 p.m. on Dec. 4.

The most anticipated game of the Class 2A playoffs is the Dec. 4 rematch between No. 4 seed St. Charles Catholic and No. 1 John Curtis at Joe Yenni Stadium (7 p.m.). The Comets' lone loss in 13 games was a 19-18 come-from-behind win by Curtis.

Both have coasted through the playoffs. Curtis has won by an average margin of 46 points and St. Charles by a margin of 34 points.