

A Bowl Game played before Christmas is not really a Bowl Game

A football "Bowl Game" once represented accomplishment. It represented achievement. To be invited to play in a Bowl Game meant the team had done well - had performed above average and had a winning record, probably even won a conference championship.

Now, a bowl invitation means little. Eligibility is based on having six wins, five against D-1 opponents, not competence.

For the 2009 NCAA season, 73 teams are eligible for the 68 (34 bowl games) spots. There are only 119 NCAA Division 1 football programs. Seemingly, each year one or two bowl games are added to the already overcrowded mix.

This year, bowl games begin on December 19th, when the poorest teams face off in two different games. Wyoming plays Fresno State in the first game that day (New Mexico Bowl) in Albuquerque and Rutgers plays the University of Central Florida in a night game on the 19th. That is the St. Petersburg Bowl and the game is played, appropriately enough, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

CollegeFootballNews.com wrote that the UW / Fresno State game "Could Suck Because," ... "Wyoming isn't very good at playing football." Ouch! The Cowboys beat only teams beneath them in the MWC final standings and lost to every team above them. Other than the New Mexico game, which UW won 37-13, the 'Pokes winning margin in the other five games was 7, 3, 2, 3 and 1 point.

In their six losses, the Cowboys were shut out three times and scored 10 points in each of the other three losses - a total of 30 points scored in six losses. Not exactly bowl material in the "old days."

As the season wore on, the team's lack of popularity with fans was shown by drawing crowds of 19,201 against BYU (when BYU was ranked No. 25) and 15,031 against TCU (when TCU was ranked No. 4 in the nation).

But, because almost every eligible team receives a bowl bid, Wyoming takes its unremarkable fifth place MWC finish to the very first bowl game of 2009-2010.

At that, it's hard to understand why UW was treated as shabbily as it was. Playing in a game that will get scant attention, UW drew the short straw again. Except for contractual arrangements, the fifth place team in the MWC should not have received this invitation. There were five teams not bowl-bound. One, Kansas State, also finished with a 6-6 record and was 4-4 in the stronger Big 12. They did not receive a bowl invitation. Included in their wins was a 62-14 win over Texas A&M, which will play Georgia in the Independence Bowl on December 28th. A&M had a 3-5 conference record. But they aren't the worst team in a bowl game.

UCLA finished with a 3-6 PAC 10 record

and will play Temple, the ACC #8 team, on December 29th in the EagleBank Bowl. How is that fair to UW?

Besides Kansas State, teams with six wins who will not play in a bowl game are Louisiana-Monroe, Louisiana-Lafayette, Hawaii and Notre Dame. Notre Dame would have been given one of the choice bowls except the school pulled itself out of consideration because of a coaching change. That has happened very seldom in the past - a mediocre team refusing a bowl invitation.

There were 12 teams that finished with a 6-6 record and Hawaii finished with a 6-7 record. Of those 13 teams, five had losing conference records. There were another seven teams with winning overall records but losing conference records. Of these twenty teams, nine will play their bowl game on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day or January 2nd. Those are the prestigious dates except for the BCS games, which are even later. Again, of those nine teams, seven had losing conference records.

Yet, they will play bowl games with much greater payouts and at much better dates than will Wyoming. Why?

Big Ten schools get automatic bowl invitations if they're eligible (almost everyone else does anymore, too) and Minnesota is the Big Ten's #6 team this season. UM finished their season 6-6 and were 3-5 in conference play. They lost four of their last six games and were No. 113 of 119 teams in total offense for the season. Oh, yeah, they deserve to play a New Year's Eve bowl game.

Decades back, the games used to be the Sugar Bowl, Orange Bowl, Cotton Bowl and Rose Bowl. Now, almost every contest has a sponsor's name ahead of the Bowl name. Some names are unknown: R&L Carriers New Orleans Bowl, San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl, Gaylord Hotels Music City Bowl, Emerald Bowl, Bell Helicopters Armed Forces Bowl, Insight Bowl, Roady's Humanitarian Bowl, etc.

Other sponsors include MAACO, Sheraton, Meineke, Little Caesar's Pizza, Champ's, Pacific Life, Brut, Outback, Capital One, Konica Minolta, Allstate, AutoZone, AT&T, Papajohn's.com, Valero, Tostitos, FedEx, GMAC and Citi.

Only the Rose Bowl retains the dignity of having the bowl name first: "Rose Bowl Presented by Citi."

The BCS National Championship game will pit Alabama and Texas and will be played in Pasadena on January 7th, four weeks after the first '09-'10 bowl game between Wyoming and Fresno State.

Why do bowl teams so often repeat? The extra few dozen practices the underclassmen get don't hurt. Non-bowl teams aren't allowed those practices.

Cheyenne Area Convention & Visitors Bureau wants a new name

A show of hands, please.

Does anyone care what the CACVB calls itself?

I didn't think so.

Yet, there is a move afoot to change the name, as though the current one was difficult to pinpoint just what the group is supposed to be doing. How much clearer could it be? They try to attract visitors and conventions to Cheyenne. It's a perfect name. Why change it?

Probably it's not impressive enough. Maybe not romantic enough.

But it is perfectly descriptive for their job assignments.

Therein probably lies the problem.

When your name aptly tells others what you're supposed to be doing and you are unsuccessful in that quest, one way to try to camouflage that failure would be to take another name.

Take the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce. Hell, they're not even doing a respectable job of being the Downtown Chamber of Commerce. "Greater Cheyenne?" That's a stretch.

CACVB director Darren Rudloff hasn't taken the position that they will change the name - just that they're considering such an action. But, they will.

He believes the name sounds "bureaucratic or governmental." That's because it is. Both. The money they get to operate comes from taxpayers. That makes the group kinda governmental.

He also laments that the current name is "quite a mouthful, causing people to often use incorrect variations of the name, further adding to confusion." So? Any variation would be an improvement over the nearly anonymous life they now lead.

His confusion claim reminds me of a new fire chief who arrived in Cheyenne needing back surgery and wept that the Cheyenne Fire Department (CFD) was too similar in acronym to Cheyenne Frontier Days (CFD) and he convinced the headnoddors at City Hall that he needed to take over the ambulance service so he could add "Rescue" to the name so no rodeo cowboy would confuse the fire department with Frontier Days. What?

Darren thinks a name like "Discover Cheyenne" would be a better moniker. A suggestion from one who has spent a career in graphics and writing: Never put anything before "Cheyenne" in your name. When I started this publication, I considered using a name like "The Plains Examiner," until I realized that no one could tell by the name where the publication called home or served.

They'd have a lot better chance to be found as "Cheyenne" something as "Discover" or "Visit" in an internet search.

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