

Journal of Issues in **Intercollegiate Athletics**

Reviewing the Public Discourse of the Division I (Football Bowl Subdivision) Playoff Issue Pre-BCS: A Historical Analysis of Core Event Stakeholder Perspectives

Chad Seifried

Louisiana State University

Opinions from the various stakeholders of the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), such as conference commissioners, university presidents/chancellors, bowl executives, and coaches, are numerous and well documented by the popular media since the establishment of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) in 1998. The public discourse offered by the various popular media sources significantly influenced the behaviors and perspectives of others on the prospects of a Division I FBS playoff before the BCS. Few academic and historical reviews of the core event stakeholders (i.e., athletic directors, coaches, and players) involved with the playoff debate have been formally organized prior to the establishment of the BCS. This research effort analyzed the public discourse generated by the core event stakeholders from 1960 to 1998 and compared the rationale of those supporting a Division I FBS playoff versus those arguments which created a specific culture overtime to prevent the facilitation of a national elimination tournament. Finally, this work discusses whether these anti-playoff concerns, still advocated today, are legitimate.

Introduction

Passionate discussions regarding the current Bowl Championship Series (BCS) selection procedures and bowl arrangements have evoked a tremendous amount of interest in a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sponsored playoff for the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (i.e., formerly Division I-A). BCS bowls, including the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl, Discover Orange Bowl, Rose Bowl, Allstate Sugar Bowl, and the National Championship, are noted for their obscure selection procedures, use of subjective polls, and the incorporation of computer ratings through mathematical formulas to create the choices for each year's bowl contests and heated debates surrounding those choices (Seifried & Smith, 2011). Collectively, most scholarly endeavors have identified the disagreements as focused on the: a) logistical possibility of alternative postseason formats and their impact on student-athlete welfare; b) the financial discrepancy between notable programs representing both automatic qualifying BCS (i.e., Atlantic Coast Conference [ACC], Big East, Big 12, Big Ten, Pac-12, and Southeastern [SEC], and Notre Dame) and non-automatic qualifying BCS institutions (i.e., Conference-USA, Mid-American Conference [MAC], Mountain West Conference [MWC], Sun Belt, Western Athletic Conference [WAC], U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Military Academy); and c) the

alleged bias and barriers the BCS selection process employed (Oriard, 2009; Seifried, 2011; Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001; Southall, Southall, & Dwyer, 2009).

Additional investigations by the Knight Foundation (Sandbrook, 2004) and U.S. Congress (BCS or bust, 2003; The Bowl Championship Series, 2009; Competition in college, 2003; Determining a champion, 2005; Hearing on BCS, 2009) identified support for the current bowl arrangement is particularly strong among the automatic qualifying BCS institutions but also openly questioned the BCS's legitimacy and its ability to ensure merit or fully meet the NCAA's core values of supporting an inclusive culture that fosters the equitable participation of student-athletes toward the pursuit of athletic excellence and personal integrity (NCAA Mission, 2011). Support for the BCS from the institutional administrative core (i.e., conference commissioners and university presidents/chancellors) likely occurs because BCS-charter schools historically collected a significantly larger guaranteed share of the bowl system's available opportunities and money versus their non-BCS charter peers (Seifried & Smith, 2011). As an example, this arrangement has allowed automatic BCS institutions to obtain \$621,675,447 (i.e., 86.6% and \$124,335,089/year) of the \$717,639,147 million produced by the 24 BCS bowl games played between the 2005/2006 and 2009/2010 bowl seasons (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2010a, 2010b).

In addition to the basic revenue differences, the BCS has also been attacked because non-BCS schools do not receive equal payment in comparison to their BCS peers for participation in the same BCS contests. For instance, in 2009, TCU (MWC) and Boise State (WAC) both received bids to participate in 2010 Fiesta Bowl and were rewarded with payouts of \$9.8 million and \$7.8 million respectively. Two Big Ten and SEC schools earned over \$22 million for participation in two separate BCS games while the ACC, Big East, Big 12, and Pac-10 were awarded \$17.7 million each for their participation in one BCS contest (Non-BCS Conferences, 2009). Scholars Michael Oriard (2009) and Keith Dunnivant (2004) identified such differences BCS and non-BCS guarantee the border between those institutions will remain strong.

Other features of the BCS v. playoff debate have focused on the impact the BCS revenue distribution system imposes on non-automatic qualifying BCS schools. As an example, the revenue distribution chasm prevents non-automatic qualifying BCS schools from upgrading their facilities, improving student-athlete academic services, providing competitive coaching salaries, and recruiting highly-rated student-athletes at the same level as their automatic qualifying BCS peers (Sandbrook, 2004; Seifried & Smith, 2011). Furthermore, this discrepancy stigmatizes the non-automatic qualifying BCS schools to be less prestigious than their peers. Other comments or discussions on the appropriateness of the current bowl arrangement also attack the restrictions non-automatic qualifying BCS schools endure to gain access to BCS bowl games. The dialogue also similarly highlights the fact that the BCS arrangement leaves out many high-quality BCS teams too which may affect consumer welfare/preferences and potential antitrust complaints (Seifried, 2011; Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001).

The current Division I (FBS) postseason arrangement suggests a formal review of the playoff question needs further consideration in light of changing conditions, abilities, and resources available today. Robert Ours, author of *Bowl games: College football's greatest tradition*, similarly supports this argument as he has suggested that the BCS system is not "fully effective" and that studying the bowl game product from a variety of perspectives is useful to reveal how they developed into a powerful phenomenon capable of creating barriers that resist consumer preferences for a playoff (Ours, 2004, p. VIII). The opinions of the various stakeholders of college football are numerous and well documented by the popular media since

the establishment of the BCS and growth of the internet and other forms of social networking (e.g., blogs, twitter, facebook, etc...). However, the history of the thoughts and feelings of athletic directors, coaches, and players (i.e., core stakeholders) before the BCS has not been formally organized and is generally absent in the scholarly literature (Seifried, 2011).

As an underdeveloped topic, exploring the public discourse concerning the thoughts of these core event stakeholders on the playoff debate appears legitimate because misinformation may be present regarding the thoughts of those actually participating and/or creating the postseason event. For instance, coaches, student-athletes, and athletic directors have been surveyed regarding the possibility of a playoff and identified as critical figures in the discussion regarding the management of the Division I FBS postseason (“Committee opposes football,” 1993; Seifried, 2011; “Student-athletes voice,” 1994). However, despite highlighting the important contribution these core event stakeholders make toward the production of the college football postseason, those surveys have not adequately communicated the potential personal losses or gains collectively experienced by each subgroup. Moreover, they did not indicate or report on the previous context or environmental limitations which prevented the facilitation of an alternative postseason format from the core event stakeholder perspective. Instead, groups like the BCS utilize results from poorly conceived surveys (i.e., non-scholarly) such as those completed by ESPN to advocate the continuance of the bowl system and the position that the bowl system has always been favored over a “playoff” (“BCS media guide,” 2011, p. 5, 7, 14-16; “College football playoff confidential,” 2010).

The public debates provided by the various news outlets prior to the establishment of social media networks undoubtedly influenced the opinions and activities of others on the playoff topic prior to 1998 (Seifried, 2011). This research effort will review the public discourse generated by these core event stakeholders (i.e., athletic directors, head coaches, and players) within national newspapers and *The NCAA News* archives to identify their contribution to the Division I FBS playoff versus bowl debate and their arguments which created a specific culture overtime to prevent the facilitation of a national elimination tournament. This review adequately serves as a follow-up piece to previous academic work on administrator opinions regarding the Division I FBS playoff issue published by *Sport History Review* (Seifried, 2011). Specifically, Seifried’s (2011) historical examination of the administrative core (i.e., bowl commissioners, presidents/chancellors, and NCAA officials/committees) and their management of the Division I postseason pre-BCS (i.e., 1960-1999) showcased how gridlock was created through NCAA committees, university administrators, and bowl game executives to rebuff any playoff attempts. Overall, Seifried emphasized continuing the bowl game tradition was historically supported and advocated by administrative core to protect the bowls through arguments which focused on the academic welfare of student-athletes and the logistical difficulties of setting up a playoff.

Additional Literature Review

Several other manuscripts have also identified and reviewed the numerous arguments and claims emerging from the critical stakeholders associated with the operation and management of the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) postseason from a variety of perspectives (Oriard, 2009, Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001; Southall, et. al., 2009). This section offers up a brief review of some manuscripts and how they have primarily focused on the perspectives of conference commissioners, university presidents/chancellors, bowl representatives, and

NCAA personnel/committees while ignoring the core event stakeholders. It also discloses a rationale for the frame of this investigation (i.e., 1960-1999).

Michael Oriard's (2009) *Bowled over: Big-time college football from the sixties to the BCS era* featured discussion on various reform movements in the NCAA such as freshman eligibility, institution admission standards, and implementation of the one-year renewable scholarship. In that work, Oriard demonstrated Division I football student-athletes evolved into commodities or resources over time because institutions increasingly used them to help generate revenue and produce episodes of spectacle for mass consumption. The Division I FBS bowls games were highlighted in his work as a component of that culture since the 1960s that undermines academics and supports entitlement and exploitation.

Ronald Smith's (2001) *Play-by-play: Radio, television and big-time college sport* is a thorough review of college football media coverage focused on the interaction between the NCAA and several television and radio broadcasting companies. Advocating that the resulting by-product was have and have-not institutions (i.e., BCS and non-BCS institutions), Smith described a troubled relationship between institutions of higher education and broadcasting companies emerged when television revenue prompted unusual reform efforts such as Oriard depicted. By exploring the growth of television and its role on bowl production and possible playoff scenarios, Smith also showed NCAA administrators and various institutional leaders (i.e., chancellors and presidents) were reluctant to relinquish total control over Division I football's postseason arrangement. Specifically, Smith demonstrated this through recognizing the creation of numerous NCAA committees to review the playoff versus bowl topic.

Seifried and Smith's (2011) investigation of U.S. Congressional hearings from 2003 to 2009 examined the legitimacy of the BCS from the administrative core perspective along with those offered by members of Congress and the various committees they established to review the topic. Their content analysis similarly showed playoff efforts thwarted by beliefs that the academic welfare of student-athletes would be negatively affected, the bowl games would cease to exist, and the logistical difficulty with arranging such an event. However, their review also showed antitrust violations were possible with the current BCS arrangement, identified the financial chasm between Division I FBS institutions was growing, featured the growth of technology, and recognized the fundamental fairness issue was important to reconsider before any future judgments on the BCS versus playoff debate. In essence, their document supported a new effort to compare the competitive and anti-competitive aspects of each position.

Finally, John Sandbrook's (2004) report on the *Division I-A postseason football history and status* for the Knight Commission offered an extraordinary review of the Division I FBS bowl history and presented critical information to support the strength of resistance against a playoff. Promoting the bowl games and their host communities as enjoying a historical partnership with college institutions, Sandbrook first demonstrated change to a playoff would meet much resistance from the administrative core because they eventually created a television property which assures important financial resources annually for each of them. Next, Sandbrook presented the reoccurring rationale offered by the administrative core for denying prospective playoff designs. Other financial, television, sponsorship, scheduling, and academic data were imparted to highlight the authority of administrators and their positions. Finally, Sandbrook communicated that the overwhelming information from the administrative perspective suggests there is a need to review the core event stakeholders and their opinions to help referee this challenging debate on the future management of the NCAA Division I FBS postseason.

Below is a description of the historical method and steps recommended by Seifried (2010) and the epistemology work of Booth (2005) on sport history used to complete this work. The historical method was identified as a preferred research tool to achieve the purpose of this study which centered on analyzing the public discourse generated by the core event stakeholders from 1960 to 1998 regarding the debate over whether to support a Division I FBS playoff or continue with the traditional bowl system. It is the goal of this work to use the historical method to communicate those items which, overtime, prevented the facilitation of a national tournament.

Research Procedures and Limitations

Step one, required the pursuit and acquisition of primary and secondary source newspaper articles from important national media publications (i.e., *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *USA Today*, and *Boston Globe*) between 1960 through the creation of the BCS in 1998. These sources were selected because they are nationally consumed newspapers and provide a balanced view of the playoff and bowl discussion from a variety of geographic locations. The specific time frame initially started with the 1950s because few bowl games existed prior to that decade. Furthermore, a formal review of the bowl system did not occur until the 1950s regarding the prospects of a national elimination tournament when a couple reviews were conducted to measure the possible impact of bowl games on important institutional stakeholders such as presidents, coaches, athletic directors, and student-athletes (Laurent, 1953; Post-season play, 1952; School heads, 1952). However, the information presented below uses a time frame which starts with 1960 based on the information noted above and that found in the research process.

Research databases such as ProQuest (Historical Newspapers), Lexis-Nexis (Academic), and SportDiscus were readily used to discover the information. Thus, the investigation was limited in some respects by the institutional agreements of the researcher. To compensate for this limitation, the researcher elected to utilize archived issues of *The NCAA News*, a publication produced by the NCAA. *The NCAA News* presented important information on NCAA published materials and offer further news about the playoff debate from the core event stakeholders (i.e., coaches, athletic directors, and student-athletes) for additional geographic balance. Secondary sources incorporated into this review also included history books, academic articles, and reviews of research. This range of primary and secondary sources was sought out because themes, quotes, and characters evolving from the analysis should be corroborated by other sources when possible. The researcher also believed this approach better identified the context of the changing nature of bowl games and the various postseason ambitions because comparing and contrasting the found information was more readily available.

Step two of this historical research project involved the use of a historical criticism to test the reliability of sources and the comparison of observations and findings against one another. Overall, the historical criticism helped avoid the selection and use of some data to favor a specific hypothesis by reviewing the credibility of sources both internally and externally. Internally, the researcher questioned the accuracy of the data provided by each source by looking for 'holes' in explanations and the various statistics provided. The author or speaker's intended audience and their reputation as an expert or non-expert (i.e., job title) was also considered during the internal criticism in addition to possible prejudice due to local or national affiliations. Certifying the authenticity of primary and secondary source evidence through comparing and contrasting also allowed for the preparation of accurate conclusions. This is an example of

external criticism. Reviewing and analyzing documents through using comparison and contrast questions like identifying the author(s), their relationship to the report information, and their method for collecting news helped establish reliability and validity. Other checks for trustworthiness conducted by the researcher included identifying the date of work and temporal arrangement of events within the document.

To complete the final and third step of this inquiry, the researcher counted and quantified information from the various sources and separated themes, words, contexts, characters, biases, and ideas perceived to be mutually exclusive. Categories included: 1) name and position of stakeholder; 2) institution and location of school; 3) current BCS/non-automatic qualifying BCS identification (mentioned above); 4) playoff/bowl system support (i.e., for or against); 5) type of playoff preference (i.e., four, six, eight, twelve, sixteen, etc.); and 6) any important quotes offered by those individuals. To assure proper placement into each category, the stakeholder group (i.e., student-athlete, athletic director, coach, etc.) and institutional region (i.e., Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West) also needed specific identification tags (see table 1). The controlled conditions provided an inter-coder reliability of 90% and an intra-coder reliability of 98% selecting and assigning information into the various categories with the help of a graduate student peer reviewer. Both numbers exceed general benchmark standards (i.e., 80%). This high percentage was expected because the articles provided obvious statements and information, which was less subject to misinterpretation (Tan, 1985). Below is a statistical breakdown of the data before a presentation of the discovered themes. Again, this mixed-method type presentation followed Seifried (2011) and is not unusual in historical reviews.

Table 1: Example information collection from one article

Type of Playoff	For or Against	School	Individual and Job/Position	Region	Remarks
8 Team	For	Northwestern	Stu Holcomb, Athletic Director	Midwest	Described the playoff idea as an 8-team "world series"
	Against		Reaves Peters, Big Eight Commissioner	Southwest	Suggested weather may be problem in January in Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Midwest
	Against		Asa Bushnell, ECAC Commissioner	Northeast/Mid-Atlantic	Argued playoff would be excessive (i.e., add extra games to student-athlete calendar and regular season was sufficient)
	Against		Bernie Moore, SEC Commissioner	Southeast	General reaction was it would prolong season too much
	N/A	Michigan	Fritz Crisler, Athletic Director/Former Head Coach	Midwest	Insisted all bowl games are college controlled and institutions not subject to commercialism

Note. Information collected from “Coaches cool on playoff” (1960) from *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

Results

The various databases used in this study produced comments from 74 former and current head football coaches and 41 athletic directors from 260 articles. Athletic directors trended toward supporting a playoff ($n=23$ or 56.1%) over the general history of the discussion. However, several ($n=10$ or 24.4%) remained dedicated to the bowl systems or presented themselves as neutral ($n=8$ or 19.5%) on the topic. Head football coaches also interestingly leaned toward supporting the playoff ($n=45$ or 60.8%) for the public record. Joe Paterno (Penn State) emerged as the most vocal individual and head coach favoring the playoff concept. Other notable coaches and former presidents of the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) frequently seen joining his opinion over the years included Duffy Daugherty (Michigan State), Dan Devine (Notre Dame), Vince Dooley (Georgia), Bear Bryant (Alabama), Bud Wilkinson (Oklahoma), Bobby Ross (Georgia Tech), and John Cooper (Arizona State). Nearly thirty coaches ($n=27$ or 36.5%) argued against the playoff idea. Other AFCA member coaches representing this perspective included Jimmy Johnson (Miami), Don James (Washington), John McKay (USC), Tom Osborne (Nebraska), Woody Hayes (Ohio State), Bo Schembechler (Michigan), and Barry Switzer (Oklahoma). Interestingly, almost all comments and opinions printed on the playoff topic from athletic directors and football coaches came from current BCS institutions. Only a handful of people ($n=10$) were from current non-BCS institutions. Current non-BCS institutions were represented by Toledo, Rice, BYU, Temple, Army, Navy, North Texas, San Jose State, Hawaii, and Utah.

From a geographical perspective, there was good balance in the reported comments and opinions by the various stakeholder groups. Each of the major regions of the United States (i.e., Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West) and the BCS conferences was well represented by the various sources. Specifically, the Big Ten and SEC were represented by 8 institutions. The Pac-10 and ACC produced comments and positions through 7 institutions while the Big 12 ($n=6$), Big East ($n=4$) and Notre Dame also contributed to the conversation. The type of playoffs supported by the various individuals varied greatly depending on preferences for a specific number of teams and the selection procedures to be used. The lack of universal agreement is a theme that reoccurs consistently through the timeframe of this study. As an example, the sources generally discussed it would be necessary to provide an option for the bowl sites to include themselves into the NCAA managed event and that eight teams appeared as the best option during the 1960s (Langford, 1967; Milbert, 1969; White, 1967, 1968).

The 1970s featured most discussion on two, eight, and sixteen team tournament arrangements but the decade clearly showed a clear preference for a four-team playoff and/or any that incorporated bowl games into the tournament. The four-team playoff was mentioned three times more ($n=12$) than either the eight or sixteen-team playoff ($n=4$). In the 1980s, the two, four, and sixteen-team playoffs were all mentioned and supported identically ($n=10$). Again, like the previous decades the bowls were considered to be preferred sites by many for any playoff contest/format. From 1990 until the start of the BCS, the two, four, and eight-team playoff appeared the most visible option for playoff advocates. The bowls were also identified as to be protected by those who favored a playoff during the 1990s. Below is a more detailed summary

with each time period highlighting the comments and general thoughts of the core event stakeholders (i.e., coaches, athletic directors, and student-athletes) the center of this discussion.

The 1950s and 60s: Beginning the Formal Public Discourse

In 1952, the NCAA's Extra Events Committee investigated the impact of bowl games on coaches, student-athletes, presidents, athletic directors, and regular student populations (Laurent, 1953; "Post-season play backed," 1952; "School heads," 1952). The survey presented coaches (63.4%) and athletic directors (57.2%) as generally favoring the bowl games. Of the 639 student-athletes surveyed, 89.7 percent of them indicated they too favored the bowls. Expectedly, the playoff concept was tabled at this point. Prior to that, Fritz Crisler (Athletic Director and Former Head Coach- Michigan) argued, "One game [or more after the bowls] won't decide which team is best" and the weather, travel, and physical requirements of football notably place it as a "hot stove argument every year" (Crisler, 1948, p. 39). This view was generally accepted until 1960.

Stu Holcomb, Athletic Director at Northwestern University, reintroduced the NCAA to the playoff idea with an 8-team "world series" to coaches, administrators, and conference commissioners in 1960 ("Coaches cool on playoff," 1960). Although supported by many, the playoff concept would not gain more attention until the late 1960s. Duffy Daugherty (Michigan State) led the way among head coaches as he speculated that a college football elimination tournament would serve the public interest in the game and act as a better way to determine a national champion. Daugherty's suggestion for a National Collegiate Football Championship tournament was taken more seriously with the ascension of the American Football League (AFL) and National Football League (NFL) as commercial products. As competitors, the AFL and NFL produced teams who participated in the same cities as bowl games (Condon, 1967; Gallaher, 1967; White, 1967).

Besides presenting great scheduling challenges to those sites hosting both, like the 1967 Cotton Bowl, Daugherty further suggested a college playoff would be necessary to maintain its superiority over the NFL product from a commercial perspective. Daugherty lacked confidence that bowl games alone were sufficient enough to promote the college product to consumers and could be considered "drab affairs" in comparison to NFL, AFL, and Super Bowl contests where championships were on the line (Gallagher, 1967, p. 2). To emphasize this point, Daugherty highlighted that three teams finished the 1966 season undefeated (i.e., Alabama 11-0, Notre Dame 9-0-1, and Michigan State 9-0-1) but only Notre Dame received recognition as the national champion. Interestingly, this occurred despite the fact that Notre Dame did not participate in a bowl game and tied Michigan State who also could not participate in a bowl game due to Big Ten bylaws which prohibited a repeat appearance in the Rose Bowl. Alabama, meanwhile, destroyed Nebraska 34-7 in the Sugar Bowl to elevate the public discourse.

A spirited Daugherty offered his vision of an 8-team tournament following his team's second place finish in the polls by offering a playoff that would begin the next to last week of November on the home field of a higher seeded team and extend until the first week or middle of December (Gildea, 1967). Daugherty felt this schedule would not hurt the student-athlete's academic programs and presented the tournament as a commercially attractive product. Daugherty disputed thoughts that the same teams would consume the eight spots each year because he favored a special NCAA selection committee to make the seeding choices and argued, "College football runs in cycles. You cannot have consistently good teams" (Gildea, 1967, p. D3). Before we continue, it should be noted that it was not until after the 1965 season

that the national champion began to be determined after the bowls, at least in *Associated Press* poll. Prior to that, the various news agencies popularly awarding the national championship (i.e., *Associate Press* [AP] and *United Press International* [UPI]) released the results of their poll's national champion at the conclusion of the regular season (Smith, 2001). The AP and eventually UPI, in 1974, decided on a new national championship strategy due to vigorous complaints resulting from the 1965 season which produced another split national title; this time between Alabama (AP) and Michigan State (UPI).

Like Daugherty, former AFCA presidents and coaches Frank Broyles (Arkansas) and John McKay (USC) also posited the elimination tournament would be a commercially attractive mega event for college football and that it was possible to support that along with a bowl system provided some creative management occurred. Another former AFCA president Coach Ben Schwartzwald (Syracuse) further added he felt an 8-team elimination tournament would not hurt his players academically and would certainly enhance the sport through television (Condon, 1967; Langford, 1967). Other coaches also supported an elimination tournament by 1967 through the AFCA which asked for the NCAA's Executive Committee to study the feasibility of the topic (Damer, 1967). The trustees of the AFCA headed by former Oklahoma Head Coach Bud Wilkinson supported the proposal because they were unsatisfied with the polls and bowl games as the determining factors in subjectively awarding the national title. The AFCA argued the other sports offered by the NCAA are determined by postseason tournaments so they questioned why Division I football could not be afforded the same opportunity. Again, the AFCA recognized the importance and uniqueness of the bowl games to college football and encouraged any playoff to consider its impact on those events.

As a response to the various protests and appeals made to the NCAA by these important coaching figures, the NCAA created a nine-member committee to study the feasibility of the college football playoff in 1967 (Damer, 1967; "NCAA considers own Super Bowl," 1968). The purpose of the committee was to "to find out if there is a workable plan and if so to submit it to the convention a year from now" ("NCAA considers own Super Bowl," 1968, D1). However, that committee was disbanded by the NCAA Executive Committee during in spring of 1969 before it got to make a recommendation ("Executive committee," 1969; "Playoff plan," 1969).

The reasons for the disbanding of the committee likely had to do with the strength of the opposition. For example, Ara Parseghian (Notre Dame Head Coach) saw any playoff over two teams as problematic because of scheduling difficulties and travel complications ("Ara," 1967). Ara further identified the playoff as overly commercial and too much like professional football. Dick Larkins, Athletic Director at Ohio State, also criticized the playoff idea due to travel commitments and conflicts with his institutional academic schedules (White, 1968). The bowl committees also were speculated to have exerted heavy influence on the disbanding of this committee, particularly since the Big Ten, SEC, and Pac-8 (i.e., Pac-10/12) conferences enjoyed a successful financial relationship with the various bowls ("Playoff plan," 1969). College football historian Ronald Smith also discovered the NCAA Television Committee of 1966 originally noted many university administrators resisted the playoff idea because it commercialized football and would likely bestow unnecessary power to coaches. Smith also suggested the relenting pressure from ABC television's Roone Arledge to stage a playoff was resented and prompted university administrators to sabotage all playoff options (Smith, 2001).

The 1970s: Coaches and AD's Take 'Saturday Night Fever' to the Committees

The 1970s began with the NCAA securing the opinions on the possible negative and positive aspects of developing a national tournament for Division I football ("Two opinions," 1971). William Miller Jr., Faculty Athletic Representative for North Texas State acted as the voice which favored the playoff while Tennessee Athletic Director, Bob Woodruff, was against the national tournament. Their opinion adequately serves to provide the base of most opinions offered through this decade and beyond (Kindred, 1978).

Woodruff opposed a national tournament for several reasons. First, Woodruff felt a national playoff would impose significant negative consequences on student-athletes during the stretch run of their academic studies. In the view of Woodruff, establishing special exam schedules was undesirable and potentially dangerous because it extended the academic calendar for some institutions into the holiday season. The mechanics of selecting teams for the tournament also emerged as a major point of contention Woodruff connected to the practicality of the playoff. Specifically, Woodruff offered the strength of schedules of teams would have to be taken into account and that picking the right teams based on this "would be an impossible thing to prove" ("Two Opinions," 1971, p. 1). Woodruff further argued a playoff field could not be any larger than eight teams due to time constraints and that the champion from a national tournament might not be any "more deserving of the title than the so-called mythical champions now selected by the wire service polls" ("Two Opinions," 1971, p. 1).

Woodruff further predicted a national playoff would undoubtedly produce severe hardships on the bowl game communities and likely overshadow the bowls so that "many of them would die from a lack of interest" ("Two Opinions," 1971, p. 1). Woodruff added that he felt the sport of college football grew as a direct result of its relationship with the bowls so it 'owed' those locations and organizations their annual loyalty, gratitude, and attendance. Still, the most fascinating reason Woodruff offered for opposing the playoff centered on the need for sectionalism. Woodruff argued college football benefitted tremendously by the public discourse which occurs annually between alumni and friends of college programs about which teams are superior. The devotion and pride generated by championship worthy teams prompted passionate debates about the sport to further push it in the spotlight. This debate and the arguments about which team really was best was in the view of Woodruff important for the health of the sport and helped differentiate it from professional football (Markus, 1973; "Two Opinions," 1971).

In contrast, Miller first positioned competition "as the heart and soul of intercollegiate football" and that all institutions should enjoy a real opportunity to challenge the super elites in order to "test their achievement capability" ("Two Opinions," 1971, p. 3). Miller recognized the powers of college football generated significant traditions which their alumni, fans, and student populations wished to uphold. Interestingly, Miller argued 12-15 schools annually secured a placement as a traditional super power in college football. However, Miller also felt it was important to broaden the base of competition to include those programs who also dedicated themselves to the highest level of Division I competition.

Miller next suggested an organized national tournament would help resolve the raging debates between student-athletes, coaches, alumni, and fan nations about who is best. Miller also argued those groups deserve to see this dilemma settled and that establishing a national tournament would help alleviate some concerns surrounding the growing expenses associated with maintaining competitive college athletic teams. Miller further speculated that the twelve major bowls actually caused harm to those teams and institutions not able to secure a bowl

commitment because the money from “bowl games and rich television contracts” served only a small select group of elite institutions (“Two Opinions,” 1971, p. 3). Additionally, this annual reward forced sport writers to annually recognize those blessed institutions as the mythical national championship when they may not in fact be the best team. Paul Attner (1976) provided important support for this point when he argued that Maryland, Arizona State, and Penn State possessed little chance to win the mythical national title because they are not traditionally recognized by the wire service polls as from power conferences. In the end, Miller offered the bowl games annually increased the financial chasm between super elites and the rest along with escalating the commitment to recognize them as the only real competition in the NCAA.

To address this concern, Miller provided a possible outline for a national tournament which included the champions of the recognized major conferences (i.e., Ivy, Southeast, Southern, Big Ten, Atlantic Coast, Mid-American, Big Eight, Western Athletic, Southwest, Missouri Valley, Pacific-8, and Pacific Coast Athletic) along with four major independents for a 16-team playoff format. In Miller’s proposal, the tournament would begin with regional matchups to reduce travel costs and build or maintain natural rivalries. Miller argued the entire 4-week tournament could be concluded by January 1st and that existing bowl sites would be desirable as host sites. Miller also suggested the most important bowl contests could rotate the semi-finals and finals annually and that the national tournament would rival the Super Bowl as the nation’s premier tournament (“Two Opinions,” 1971). Support for the notion that the NFL playoffs existed as a stronger commercial product than the bowls can be also seen from quotes by Joe Paterno (Solomon, 1973). As an example, Paterno’s undefeated 1973 team basked in virtual anonymity at the Orange Bowl due to the AFC championship game. Specifically, Paterno offered “Until the Miami-Oakland game is over I doubt if we’ll be noticed” (Solomon, 1973, p. F4).

Duffy Daugherty continued to campaign for his 8-team playoff event in the 1970’s (Jauss, 1973). He argued a playoff was necessary to battle for entertainment dollars and that this new source of revenue could be shared among conferences to help their athletic departments. Joe Paterno as both Athletic Director and Head Coach (Penn State) also envisioned a football playoff not simply “as a source of revenue” but as likely to generate new important revenue for intercollegiate athletic departments (“Opinion,” 1978, p. 2). Paterno supported the playoff because “even with sellout crowds and television revenue, we’re going to lose money this fall” primarily because football cannot support 31 sports without more help (Rollow, 1976, p. C10). Former North Carolina State Head Coach and AFCA President Earle Edwards also encouraged others to support the 8-team playoff because “In view of the rising costs in college athletics, including the nonrevenue sports and the women’s programs, it seems very foolish for us to ignore the most lucrative, annual, new source of revenue available to us” (Barrier, 1975, p. 2).

Many other notable coaches also emerged during the decade to voice their opinion against the playoff matter. For instance, former AFCA President and Ohio State head coach Woody Hayes stayed consistent in his opposition to the playoffs and suggested those supporting the playoff movement do not really “know what’s going on” (“Woody,” 1975, p. A3). However, some speculated Hayes rejected the playoff idea because he worried about losing additional important non-conference games which could hurt the reputation of Ohio State and the Big Ten (Attner, 1976). Frank Kush (Head Coach Arizona State) presented his opposition to the playoff as putting too much pressure on young college players to perform for their coach, school, and alumni base (Jauss, 1976). Like Woodruff before, Kush presented win-at-all costs coaching as a possible outcome to the playoff movement. Win-at-all costs coaching increases the likelihood that student-athletes are looked at as commodities or resources to be utilized and disposed of

when their usefulness has expired. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood that student-athletes will be physically injured and academically disrespected because their studies are not the primary concern of coaches asked to support the entire athletic department. Barry Switzer (Head Coach Oklahoma) supported this perspective by announcing “A playoff would place tremendous pressure on the coaches” and many “would exploit the athletes” (Rollow, 1978, p. C10). Still, Switzer also preferred the bowls because “We can win more national championships with the system we have now than we ever could with a playoff tournament” (Rollow, 1978, p. C10).

The activity of the bowl selection committees also significantly contributed toward a shift of coaches towards the playoff format in the 1970s because they regularly chose teams well before the end of the season. In essence, the bowls competed by offering bids early to assure they could produce the most attractive commercial product for their community. As an example, in 1973 the Sugar Bowl extended offers to Notre Dame and Alabama in early November to play in their annual contest. The Orange Bowl quickly responded by securing Penn State and LSU to play in their event. At the time, both Penn State and LSU were undefeated but LSU lost its final two games of the season (Alabama and Tulane) to relegate Penn State’s final game against LSU as relatively meaningless toward discussion of their national championship claims. Joe Paterno argued “Something like this proves even more how much college football needs a playoff. The NCAA is kidding itself if it doesn’t believe it needs one” (Solomon, 1973, p. F4). Many others also noted the early offer by bowl games to potential participants was also a major detractor on their ability to produce the best contest and likely pushed coaches toward favoring a national tournament (Attner, 1976; Kindred, 1978; Markus, 1973).

Appropriately, discussion on another Division I Football Championship proposal appeared prior to the start of the 70th NCAA Convention (St. Louis) with a special 17-member feasibility committee. Chaired by Ernest C. Casale, Athletic Director of Temple University, the committee endorsed the establishment of a Division I football tournament at the end of the bowl season by a majority vote. Specifically, Casale claimed, “I think the fans want, and deserve, a National Football Championship, and it would be an excellent source of revenue for college football,” (“Reorganization,” 1976, p. 1). In 1976, the feasibility committee submitted a plan to the NCAA’s Executive Council for a four-team playoff while the Council also voted to add a request for a two-team championship event (“Convention,” 1975; “Reorganizing,” 1976). In those proposals, the feasibility committee recommended that a committee representative from eight distinct NCAA districts would select the participants following the final postseason bowl game so as not to affect the administration of any bowl contest and their partnerships with local community/charitable events.

In 1978, the NCAA Promotion Committee gathered college football coaches and writers together to again partially discuss the playoff idea. Representing institutions of various size and mission, opinions varied greatly concerning the best way to determine a true national champion (“Coaches want strong enforcement,” 1978). In 1979, a favorable position of the playoff idea was forwarded to the NCAA Division I Steering Committee who voted unanimously against the concept for several reasons. First, the Steering Committee saw playoffs as increasing a winning-centered mentality which could encourage the pursuit of illegitimate methods (i.e., cheating) by coaches and athletic departments to secure victories. Next, the playoff was positioned as a vehicle to help students miss an excessive amount of class during the final examinations period. Finally, a national tournament was considered to possess the potential to adversely affect the bowl arrangement colleges helped to create (“Editor’s view,” 1979; “NCAA group rejects,” 1979; Scannell, 1979; “Steering committee,” 1979; White, 1979).

David H. Strack, Athletic Director at Arizona, replied to this decision in an article to *The NCAA News* by countering several of Steering Committee points. First, Strack noted the NCAA regularly agreed to extend the men's basketball tournament from "24 to 32 to 40 to 48" with the "move to 64 as within the realm of possibility" (Strack, 1979, p. 2). This showed the NCAA demonstrated a double-standard related to increasing the pressure on student-athletes and disrupting their academic studies. To further illustrate this point, Strack emphasized the football event would take two weeks during the holiday season while the entire basketball tournament is conducted during most schools academic calendar. Final examinations in the quarter system were also noted as falling during the NCAA men's basketball event as well. In Strack's opinion, football could achieve similar confidence in a true champion under a playoff format and the opinion against a football playoff offered by the Steering Committee was a weak argument and likely disrespected football players as actual students on their campuses.

The 1980s: The Playoff "Thriller" is Told to "Beat It"

In the early 1980s, coaches and athletic directors continued to be "irked that bowl commitments" did not allow #1 and #2 "to meet in post-season play" and that high ranking teams like the sixth-ranked Southern Methodist, among the winningest college teams from 1981-1983, went uninvited by the major bowls because they lacked "marquee appeal" (Atkin, 1983, p. 26). Similar sentiments were expressed by *Boston Globe* columnist Ian Thompson (1989) in his featured article titled 'The Bowls Serve to Perpetuate the Myth: College Football a Game of Mirrors.' Ray Albom, Columnist for the *Houston Chronicle* and voter/member of the *United Press International* poll also argued he made his vote based on what he read in the newspapers and what he heard about teams because he could not watch everyone play. Albom found kindred spirits and thinking from Dave Kindred (1978) and David Moffit (1988) who similarly acted and criticized the ranking process. For obvious reasons, this decision-making process regarding the bowl and polls upset coaches and athletic directors because it suggested the national champion could be awarded to a school by people who never watched them or other title prospects play.

Polls conducted by CBS Television (1983) and the NCAA (1988) elevated the hostility by respectively releasing that 57 and 43 percent of major college coaches favored a post-season playoff during different times of the decade (Atkin, 1983). This investigation found even more public discourse favoring a playoff. For example, head coaches Steve Spurrier (Duke) and Mike Archer (LSU) thought the playoff concept was attractive and workable within the bowl system (Archer, 1988; "Tenure seen as benefit," 1988; Verdi, 1981). Indiana University's Lee Corso also preferred a playoff and specifically a plus-one set-up where a panel of coaches and writers would select two teams following the bowl games to play for the national championship. Specifically, Corso explained, "At the end of the final bowl game, those people would be called and they'd vote for one game. That game would be played at the site of the Super Bowl on the Sunday prior to the Super Bowl" (Atkin, 1980, p. 16). Joe Paterno took this concept a step further by suggesting a final four spot be awarded to each of the winners of the Orange, Cotton, Sugar, and Rose Bowls and the finals to be played just before the Super Bowl (Anderson, 1983). Still, it should be noted that Terry Donahue (UCLA Head Coach) and other AFCA coaches like Bo Schembechler (Michigan), Danny Ford (Clemson), and Tom Osborne (Nebraska) regularly criticized tournament arrangements primarily because it built up to one culminating event focused only on two teams (Ford, 1987; Osborne, 1986; Schembechler, 1986).

Playoff formats were also criticized because of logistical problems by their opponents. Specifically, it was acknowledged communication and travel technology limited the ability of playoff organizers to stage the event because making arrangements for thousands to participate in any national tournament would impose tremendous if not impossible logistical burdens towards scheduling team, facility, and fan travel requests. It was also speculated that these problems would create a crowd which lacked enthusiasm for the event and thus not commercially relevant or television-friendly. The Paterno Plan, identified above, also appeared problematic because the participants in those bowl games might not be acknowledged as the best teams in the country. Again, similar to other academic works (Oriard, 2009; Sandbrook, 2004; Seifried, 2011; Smith, 2001), this investigation shows conference agreements, television preferences, and large alumni bases were the primary factors involved with bowl selections.

The continuing and growing concern over the bowl arrangement as a method to determine a postseason champion ultimately led the College Football Association (CFA), the umbrella organizations representing major football playing schools for television rights agreements, to present multiple proposals to its membership during its annual meeting in Dallas during 1987. The CFA's Long Range Planning Committee devised formats consisting of two teams, one game; four teams, three games, and eight teams to tie into the current bowl structure because the CFA did not want "to be found in opposition of the bowls" ("CFA," 1987, p. 13). Interestingly, the 1989 proposal gained the most attention and debate due its large size ($n=16$).

The *USA Today* surveyed the 63 member schools of the CFA to collect a snapshot of their position regarding the 16-team playoff (Allen, 1989; "How CFA members," 1989). The CFA plan supported eight games in early December, four games around the New Year's holiday, two semi-final games one or two weeks later, and a championship game the weekend before the Super Bowl. The plan also included a selection committee comprised of the five Division I conferences (i.e., SEC, ACC, WAC, SWC, and Big Eight) and independent college groups (e.g., Florida State, Penn State, Notre Dame, as Northern and Southern Members) who chose the nine at-large institutions and seeded the entire bracket. Twelve members favored the proposal while 25 opposed it. Another 26 members were undecided about the playoff as presented by the CFA. DeLoss Dodds (Texas-Austin Athletic Director) openly supported the plan and suggested it was the result of "what would work best" for college football (Allen, 1989, p. 1C).

Chuck Neinas, Executive Director of the CFA (1980-1997), suggested just a single game between the perceived #1 and #2 ranked teams could generate a rights fee of roughly \$16 million, which was the same fee CBS also paid for their entire regular season package. Other estimates for the 16-team playoff itself varied from \$60-\$100 million from sponsor revenues, TV contract rights fees, and ticket sales (Craig, 1989; Raissman, 1986). Neinas based his estimate on the ascension of the NCAA men's basketball tournament revenues and the success of bowl games to attract corporate sponsors. Neinas offered he expected "major commercial firms" would like to participate in the playoff process to help sell their brand name, products, and services (Craig, 1989, p. 37). By comparison, the entire 1989 bowl season was estimated to have produced a payout of roughly \$55 million to participating schools (Donaton, 1989; "CFA still working," 1989). Ultimately, the proposal fell through primarily because coaches indicated any playoff which did not include the Big Ten or Pac-10 would ultimately fail to confidently produce a real national champion ("Opinions out loud," 1989).

The 1990s: From Chaos to Compromise

Like the previous decades, the 1990s also began with complaints about the bowl system choosing teams too early for their annual event. R.C. Slocum (Head Coach Texas A&M) presented his view on the issue by stating, "It winds up that there probably won't be a true national championship game this year [1990] because of some early commitments (Slocum, 1990, p. 4). Hawaii Coach, Bob Wagner, who also suffered from being overlooked by bowls in past seasons added, "The process now is unfair, especially to teams that play late" ("Coaches want changes," 1991, p. 3C). Former AFCA President and Iowa Head Coach Hayden Fry continued to support the perception that, "If an NCAA committee can pick 64 teams for the basketball play-off, it could select eight teams for (Division I-A) football play-off" (Fry, 1990, p. 4). Other coaches also continued their arguments for and against the playoff. As an example, former AFCA President Don James (Washington), Dennis Erickson (Miami), and Gary Moeller (Michigan) all suspected a playoff season would increase the chances of serious injuries and impose severe academic strain on their athletes (James, 1991; Moore, 1991; Welch, 1992). Georgia Tech Head Coach, Bobby Ross (1991) countered and continued to favor a playoff because he saw the bowl system as fundamentally unfair to help determine who is best and did not believe it would create academic problems for student-athletes. Joe Paterno continued to severely dislike the polls. Four times (11-0 in 1968, 11-0 in 1969, 12-0 in 1973, and 12-0 in 1994) his teams achieved undefeated records without securing a chance at the national title. Paterno noted, "I've always been for a playoff system, and I think it comes about because of the experiences I had in '68 and '69. I have always felt bad that those kids who played on our football team never once were able to say they played on a national championship team because some people voted somebody else in" (Harig, 1990, p. 1C).

To preserve the bowl system and assuage consumer demands for better match-ups, a new Bowl Coalition was created in 1991 between the Cotton, Orange, Sugar and Fiesta bowls to help produce a national champion among the Big East, ACC, SWC, SEC, Big 8, and Notre Dame. This was considered to be the best compromise for those that did not want a playoff in Division I-A [FBS] football (Adande, 1991; Blaudschun, 1991). Arkansas Athletic Director, Rick Schaeffer offered, "I think it's a good move for college football if we can preserve the bowls' integrity and the bowls' excitement for a few more years at least. I don't think we're ready for a playoff, even though I would approve it" (Adande, 1991, p. D1). Here, Schaeffer alluded to the fact that from an organizational and technological perspective, arranging a playoff that works would be logistically difficult. Television also preferred the compromise to the previous bowl arrangement because the Bowl Coalition, as J. Kendrick Noble, President of Noble Consultants suggested, "Essentially added another event which will be comparable to, but not as significant as the Super Bowl," (Adande, 1991, p. D1).

Despite the success the new Bowl Coalition (1992-1994) and later Bowl Alliance (1995-1997) produced, many criticized the arrangement because those arrangements did not include the Big Ten or Pac-10 (i.e., Pac-12). Howard Schnellenberger (Louisville Head Coach) also added, "Something is wrong with a system that predetermines that no new, young football program may aspire to be the best, no matter how hard players work or how great a commitment the school has made to excellence. The current system says that no new contenders need apply. Not now. Not ever" (Schellenberger, 1993, p. 4). Others also expressed their preference for a new playoff system that included a selection committee who chose participants using tools such as the polls and strength of schedules to select deserving teams and seed the event.

Not surprisingly, yet another committee was formed in 1993 a group to study the feasibility of a Division I-A [FBS] football Championship (“Committee opposes football,” 1993; “Group formed to gather information,” 1993). The group, which also included Donnie Duncan (Athletics Director- Oklahoma and Chair of the NCAA Special Events Committee) focused “on the \$70 million [guaranteed bowl revenue] vs. the possibility of what may or may not happen” with a playoff (“Committee Opposes Football Playoff,” 1993, p. 5). The feasibility committee was separated into three separate subcommittees which explored the potential impact that a national tournament would impose on student-athletes, the potential distribution of revenues to be raised by a playoff for the national championship, and the logistical possibility of potential formats for a national playoff (“I-A football playoff panel,” 1994). The three subcommittee chairs were J. Dennis O’Connor, Chancellor of Pittsburgh, Vincent J. Dooley, Director of Athletics and former Head Coach at Georgia, and Christine A. Plonsky, Associate Director of Men’s Athletics at Texas-Austin.

The committee’s report included more than 300 pages to summarize the opinions by: a) ten student-athletes representing Division I-A [FBS] institutions; b) officials from five major bowl associations; c) representatives of the Collegiate Commissioners Association and the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics; d) officials of six major television companies; and e) representatives from the *Associated Press* and Football Writers Association of America. In the report, student-athletes and coaches expressed reservations about extending the length of their season significantly but overwhelmingly indicated they preferred seeing the champion determined on the field. Another collection of 12 student-athletes meeting in March of 1994 also indicated they believed a national championship should be determined on the field. “In general, they were positive about a national championship concept... to find out who’s the best,” said Executive Director of the NCAA Cedric W. Dempsey (“Student-athletes voice,” 1994, p. 1). These are some of the very few opinions ever collected from student-athletes since the 1950s.

The 16-team format was acknowledged by coaches as the arrangement most likely to eliminate any controversy. Student-athletes and coaches continued to maintain their preference that the bowls be used in any playoff formats if possible. They also indicated they felt the bowls not involved in the playoff could continue to function because they were essentially glorified exhibition events. Coaches acknowledged the criteria for selecting teams would emerge as a major concern before they would agree to such a change. The special committee concluded that the concept of a playoff had merit but the group needed more time to explore the issue. The NCAA Joint Policy Board declined to continue the study of the playoff concept in June 1994.

Conclusion

The information above presented a historical summary of the public discourse in the popular media primarily from coaches and athletic directors about the idea of a national elimination tournament for Division I FBS. First, for those stakeholders who opposed the playoff, the most common reason provided, regardless of the playoff type, centered on the academic welfare of the student-athletes. This is similar to the argument provided by the administrators in previous work (Oriard, 2009; Sandbrook, 2004; Seifried, 2011; Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001). Specifically, many coaches and athletic directors forecasted a playoff would inflict unnecessary academic harm due to the likelihood that any and all playoff scenarios would extend the season and prompt winning-centered coaching. They also mentioned playoff games could overlap with the final weeks of class and final examination periods.

This discourse also showed the various opponents of the playoff from the event core believed and/or admitted that Division I FBS student-athletes were different than their counterparts at the Division I (FCS), II, and III levels and other student-athletes competing in NCAA sponsored football tournaments. As an example, they proposed the length of their grueling season and the combative nature of their athletes increased the chances that Division I FBS football players in particular would become physically injured and would fail or struggle to succeed academically. These comments suggested Division I FBS student-athletes were not as prepared academically to handle the rigors of higher learning and needed the extra time and attention following the conclusion of the season to help move them along in the institution toward eligibility. At no time during this debate did coaches or athletic directors talk about graduation. Their language and concerns focused on maintaining eligibility. This is an interesting distinction from previous work on administrator opinions (Seifried, 2011) which centered more on the graduation of student-athletes and did not try to differentiate between the different levels and the abilities of intercollegiate football to rationalize their opposition to a playoff. Media opinion related to academic integrity was importantly recognized as important by administrators much more so than coaches in this scenario (Seifried, 2011).

Several opponents to the playoff from the event core also questioned the motives of those who pushed for playoff games much like those from the administrative core. For example, playoff opponents generally appeared to sympathize with the bowls and the personnel who coordinated them. The bowls, which provided so many great memories, traditions, and served so many communities over the years, were also speculated to be in dire straights if a national tournament emerged. Essentially, this argument positioned the bowls as an important source of American heritage, the growth of college athletics, and charitable giving. One notable distinction between the administrative core offered in Seifried (2011) and the event core surrounds the financial contribution of bowls. Coaches and athletic directors basically appeared more confident in predicting higher revenue returns to share from an NCAA playoff than the administrative core who suggested they did not feel comfortable with the theoretical guesses about what a playoff could provide (Seifried, 2011). Again, the administrative core felt better about guarantees the bowl system provided and did not accept the potential revenue outcome of a national tournament as a guaranteed pay day (Seifried, 2011; Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001).

Other points of emphasis collectively centered on the logistics of staging any and all national tournaments. Similar to administrator beliefs, communication and travel technology, throughout much of the history of college football, was not sophisticated enough to adequately accommodate the travel needs of institutions, players, fans, and host communities. Coordinating the schedules and travel plans of these various groups along with television networks emerged as a legitimate and significant barrier to prevent the facilitation of a playoff which the core event stakeholders highlighted. Most playoff opponents were not convinced fans would or could travel to the various playoff locations due to significant travel costs and time commitments the national tournament would impose. Therefore, any and all predictions on the potential revenue outcome of a national tournament were speculative at best in their opinion. The technology itself was also not capable of moving people and equipment to and from locations for adequate broadcasts. Essentially, some thought the lack of a large passionate fan base, which apparently was a significant feature of the college event, would prevent future playoffs from generating adequate television attention, especially if those contests involved programs without a great legacy and non-BCS institutions (Seifried, 2011; Seifried & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2001).

Proponents for the playoff cited several different reasons for their support. The concept of fundamental fairness to find out who was best emerged as one major reason to stage a national tournament. Fundamental fairness centered on including those most deserving. For example, non-BCS institutions and non-traditional powers argued it was fundamentally unfair to preclude them from such financial resources and image rewards when they invested and created teams for the Division I FBS level and produced a successful regular season. Coaches from all types of institutions (i.e., traditional and non-traditional powers) were especially adamant about equal opportunity to prove their merit and the need to identify a true champion. Of note, coaches overwhelmingly viewed the bowl selection process throughout the 1970s and 1990s in particular as problematic because they chose teams before the season ended and conference agreements limited their ability to play the best game or most worthy opponents.

The revenue potential of any and all playoff formats was also acknowledged by many others as a significant reason to support a national tournament. As an example, Homer C. Rice (Athletic Director Georgia Tech) suggested he and other athletic directors were looking for new inventive sources of revenue to help address rising costs associated with Title IX, student-athlete services, competitive coaching salaries, and tuition in college athletics (Rice, 1987; Thomsen, 1989). Throughout the later history of college football, athletic directors and coaches also acknowledged the commercial success of the NCAA men's basketball tournaments and supported the notion that they were a good representative of what the potential financial windfall would be for a Division I FBS playoff. Although the coaches and athletic directors did not offer up specific dollars for a possible playoff, their representative organizations and committees genuinely believed that was a viable option which could provide significant relief to athletic departments to continue the pursuit of the university mission.

Playoff proponents also argued the bowls would not be significantly hurt by the playoff. Several core event stakeholders described the bowls as glorified exhibition events which from their perspective would not decrease in appeal because they were generally meaningless toward the national championship race and often did not serve as a stage for the best teams in the country or provide the best match-ups. Conference tie-ins to bowl games and their television deals were viewed as the main barrier to arrange the best contests. Many individuals argued this produced the decaying television ratings and prestige of the bowls. Furthermore, they suggested the bowls should seek out new strategies to assure their survival. Accepting an invitation to join an NCAA sponsored playoff appeared as an innovative option promoted by many because even the proponents of a playoff did not want to lose their connection to the bowl tradition. Overall, the playoff was positioned as possessing great commercial appeal and as a vehicle to help assure the success of any bowl community in the future with the right management.

Interestingly, it appears that many of the logistical concerns, arguments, and barriers offered in opposition to the playoff can be addressed today. For instance, technology has advanced to increase the flow of traffic to and from remote locations for both the live and virtual fans. As an example, computer software packages have allowed individuals, travel agencies, student-athlete academic services, and institutional travel directors to enjoy easier access and improved ability to schedule travel accommodations for participants and members of the school's fan nation. Physical travel is also quicker with more efficient transportation infrastructure management. Television technology has evolved to help live and remote spectators consume the college football product more interactively to help create, maintain, and evolve fan preferences for the consumption of the event. As an example, ESPN, Fox, and TNT recently broadcasted elite football and basketball games in three-dimensional high-definition for this

purpose (Medina, 2009; Winslow, 2009). Athletic departments are also better equipped to recruit fans and alumni to support their institution on the road through social networking technology and its associated discourse. The sophistication of their event management departments have also matured significantly since the 1960s and thus schools are more adequately prepared and better able to host playoff contests with a week's notice. Moreover, they are better able to communicate important information to help people travel and consume the event. Combined, these factors should provide confidence toward the logistical management, gate attendance, and television success of any multi-tiered playoff event and thus a reconsideration of that topic.

Communicating this information to presidents and chancellors will be necessary because they still control the gridlock concerning the prospective creation of a FBS playoff (BCS or Bust, 2003). University presidents and chancellors genuinely worry about the academic integrity of their institution and about the potential negative impacts a Division I FBS tournament could impose on their institutions related to cheating, academic failure, and the ultra-commercialization of football in particular. James Duderstadt (2003), President of the University of Michigan from 1987 to 1996, supported this perspective on behalf of presidents of the Big Ten. Still, Duderstadt (1993) suggested the lure of guaranteed money could weaken the resolve of BCS college presidents to oppose the playoff if billions over several years would be assured to their school.

Finally, this work discovered opinions by student-athletes themselves are noticeably small and absent from the various national publications and *NCAA News* literature. Only a handful of pieces ($n=7$) collected their opinions from 1960 to 1998 despite the fact they too are a significant stakeholder group involved with conducting of a college football postseason. The NCAA did establish committees to view the playoff idea from their perspective during the past couple decades but the popular media and *The NCAA News* failed to provide an adequate supply of player quotes/opinions and structured/valid surveys to report their view of the playoff topic to generate any confident position about their position on this topic. Former Syracuse Head Coach Dick MacPherson suggested that it was necessary for the NCAA to poll senior and junior players about a play-off in Division I-A [FBS] if they really wanted to get a pulse from actual participants (Majority of top football coaches, 1988). Future studies should seek to examine their perspective before any playoff or national tournament is arranged and considered. Further work should also be completed to help eliminate the use of misinformation to support a particular perspective against the playoff because this work shows this has not been the case historically.

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