Investigative reporter Gary Benz has long been a critic of the coaches polls in college football and basketball, and it's no wonder given his latest findings. In the season ending coaches poll, Tim Floyd of USC was the only voter not to have the Buckeye basketball team ranked #1. And a closer look into Floyd's voting pattern throughout the year revealed some confusing improprieties ...

To the extent that anyone is still searching for another reason why the NCAA men's basketball tournament is the best event in sports, here's one: it renders the weekly coaches poll irrelevant.

It's true that Ohio State finished the season as the near-consensus number one team in the country. And to most that should have led to their being the overall number one seed in the tournament. But that is a minor slight at best as the Buckeyes hardly suffered for not being the tournament's overall number one. The tournament serves as the best meritocracy in organized sports and gives one the sense that whoever prevails really does deserve the title.

The problem with the BCS system has been chronicled many times. But at its core, it is a compilation of numerous polls designed to hopefully pit the top two teams against each other. But since there really is no playoff, there is no way to know whether the NCAA got it right. But in Division I men's basketball, the polls are almost irrelevant except perhaps to help decide which remaining fringe teams should get in the tournament. This is a good thing because if the NCAA ever bothered to actually examine, for example, the USA Today Coaches poll it might never stop throwing up.

Perusing the poll database (click here and the click on the “polls database”) reveals all manner of oddities that makes one glad that it is meaningless. Consider the case of Tim Floyd, a poll voter and the coach of USC. There are 19 votes during the season. The first establishes the preseason rankings and the regular season voting began on November 13. In the second to last poll of the year, which occurred on March 3, Ohio State received the first place vote of every coach but one, Tim Floyd. He voted Ohio State second and Kansas first. As you may recall, two days prior to that vote Ohio State played Michigan in Ann Arbor and won 65-61 to close out the regular season. While Floyd didn’t think the Buckeyes were worthy of the number one slot, the Buckeyes narrow victory over the Wolverines didn’t cause him to put the Buckeyes lower than number two.

This is important when you look at the final week’s poll. The only thing that happened in the interim was the conference tournaments. Ohio State won the Big 10, disposing of Michigan, Purdue and Wisconsin in the process. Following that game, the last poll was taken (and the NCAA brackets were announced) and again Ohio State garnered the first place vote of every coach but one, Mr. Floyd. Ok, so he wasn’t impressed by the Buckeyes march through the conference tournament. But then how could he explain lowering them to third on his ballot? He still had Kansas first but elevated Florida to second, apparently feeling that the Gators victory over an inferior Arkansas team in the SEC tournament was more impressive than Ohio State’s victory over a much tougher Wisconsin team.

At the least this strange result begs for further analysis of both the poll and of Floyd.

Consider the week 1 or preseason poll. In that poll every coach but one voted Florida, the reigning national champ returning most of its team intact, as number one. The holdout? You guessed it, Tim Floyd. He voted Ohio State number one. In fact, he had Florida at number four, with Kansas number two and North Carolina number three. Week two saw exactly the same result. In week three, Kansas lost but Ohio State, Florida and North Carolina were still undefeated. It would seem that with the season still young, Floyd would have simply moved Kansas down, kept Ohio State at number one and moved North Carolina and Florida up accordingly. No chance. He did keep Ohio State number one, but moved Florida to number two (they had been four) and dropped North Carolina to number five (they had been three). He decided to elevate both LSU and UCLA into his top four.

Week four must have put poor Floyd into a real tailspin with Florida and North Carolina losing. He kept Ohio State number one, moved UCLA to number two, reached all the way down to Marquette as number three (based on the votes of the rest of the coaches they were ninth that week otherwise) and moved Kansas back to number four.

Then the bloom came off the rose. In week five Ohio State lost in Chapel Hill to North Carolina, 98-89. This sin really seemed to steam Floyd who dropped Ohio State all the way down to eighth on his poll. He must have felt, at least temporarily, that his faith in the Buckeyes was not being rewarded and punished them accordingly. The reason it was only temporarily is that, amazingly, the next week he elevated them back to number one. From number 8 to number one in one week! That must have meant that his number one from the previous week, UCLA, lost and/or that Ohio State had a really good week. You be the judge. UCLA remained undefeated and Ohio State beat, in short order, Valpariso and Cleveland State.

Maybe Floyd wasn't paying close attention or maybe he just made a mistake. Either way, he stayed at it, keeping Ohio State number one, despite what virtually every other coach was saying, until they lost to Florida. That drubbing pushed them down to number seven on his ballot. He inched them back up to five over the next few weeks and then dropped them back to eighth following the loss at Wisconsin. Eventually the Buckeyes were inching their way back up the polls as other teams around them were losing, landing at number two in week 15. But that wasn't good enough for Floyd, who had them ranked sixth. Even when Ohio State regained the number one position, they were not number one with Floyd, not even in that final week.

What all of this seems to illustrate more than anything else is not just the vagaries of the polls themselves but the vagaries of the coaches who vote in them, particularly Floyd. It's hard to draw a conclusion, for example, that Floyd is anti-Ohio State. His failure to elevate Ohio State late in the season was a token, mostly irrelevant gesture. Perhaps a conspiracy theorist might suggest that when Andy Geiger was looking to fill the vacancy created by the Jim O'Brien flameout and didn't hire Floyd, who was rumored at the time as a front-runner, he might be bitter toward the Buckeyes. But that doesn't seem to hold much water given his views of Ohio State early in the season and the fact that he was voting Ohio State number one when no other voter shared that opinion.

But good luck trying to find an explanation. You can do a Google search on Tim Floyd and

Ohio State and you won't find one article explaining his voting methodology. You can go to the USC web site and you won't find anything, either. In the end, the most likely scenario is that Floyd is just a first-class flake who doesn't take his roll as a voter very seriously. This is why no one should take the polls very seriously, either. But if the USA Today hopes to have its poll retain any shred of credibility, a good start would be to dismiss Floyd. As one of the worst coaches in the history of the NBA, a coach who was dismissed twice in that span, it's something he should be used to anyway.