If you like themed-majors, the first week of the 2011-12 bowl season is right up your alley. Of the fourteen teams participating in seven bowls the week before Christmas, all but one hail from non-BCS conferences, with all five of those conferences (Mountain West, Conference USA, WAC, MAC, Sun Belt) represented by multiple teams. Arizona State, sliding from Rose Bowl aspirations to the backwoods of the pre-Christmas bowls, is the lone BCS team playing this week.

Not surprisingly, the lineup is also somewhat threadbare in terms of appealing matchups. The game with the most promise might be the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, where a pair of top-25 offenses square off in what could be a fun-filled shootout. Otherwise it's a fixture filled with potentially lopsided outcomes, none more so than Boise State's Vegas Bowl meeting with near-comatose Arizona State.

But look at it this way: as non-descript as most of these games are, they still mean just as much as the farce of a "National Championship Game" between LSU and Alabama. Enjoy the bowls and have a great holiday season.

Saturday, December 18

New Mexico Bowl (Albuquerque, NM, 2:00 PM): Temple (8-4) vs. Wyoming (8-4)

First-year head coach Steve Adazzio picked up where Al Golden left off, riding one of the nation's top rushing attacks to the Temple's third consecutive winning season, the first time since 1973-75 the program has pulled that feat off. Wyoming rebounded from a poor 2010 campaign behind freshman quarterback Brett Smith, who has amassed 3,157 yards from scrimmage and 28 touchdowns. The Cowboys won the New Mexico Bowl over Fresno State two years ago, while the Owls are looking for their first bowl victory since 1979. Wyoming counters Temple's powerful ground attack with a leaky run defense; the Cowboys are yielding 5.1 yards per carry, 107th best in the nation.

Wack Predict-O: Temple 38, Wyoming 20

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl (Boise, ID, 4:30 PM): Ohio (9-4) vs. Utah State (7-5)

Fresh off a MAC title-game collapse that saw them blow a twenty-point second-half lead, the Bobcats head west in search of their first-ever bowl victory against an opponent that has made resilience its hallmark. The Aggies started out 2-5, blowing fourth-quarter leads in each of the losses, before recovering with five straight wins to finish over .500 for the first time since 1996 and go bowling for the first time since '97. Utah State relies on record-setting tailback Robert Turbin, who bounced back from a knee injury to finish eighth in the nation with 1,416 rushing yards; Ohio leans on quarterback Tyler Tettleton, who threw for 3,086 yards, ran for 590 and accounted for 35 touchdowns with his arm and legs.

Wack Predict-O: Utah State 42, Ohio 38

New Orleans Bowl (New Orleans, LA, 8:00 PM): Louisiana-Lafayette (8-4) vs. San Diego State (8-4)

Two programs led by first-year head coaches meet in the Big Easy. Mark Hudspeth led the Ragin' Cajuns to their best season since 1970 while former New Mexico boss Rocky Long guided the Aztecs to a second consecutive winning year. The man to watch in this game is

SDSU running back Ronnie Hillman. The sophomore from La Habra finished third in the nation in rushing yards with 1,656 and added 20 touchdowns. (It's appropriate, in Marshall Faulk's hometown, that an Aztec tailback should be the star of the show.) Behind the eight-ball in terms of talent, the in-state Cajuns should at least be able to count on the allegiance of most of the Superdome crowd.

Whack Predict-O: San Diego State 41, Louisiana-Lafayette 16

Monday, December 20

St. Petersburg Bowl (St. Petersburg, FL, 7:30 PM): Florida International (8-4) vs. Marshall (6-6)

FIU enjoyed the best season of its ten-year history as a program behind the spectacular talent of receiver/return specialist T.Y. Hilton, the hard running of 1,121-yard tailback Kedrick Rhodes and the steady hand of senior quarterback Wesley Carroll. After a campaign that included an upset of Big East Co-Champion Louisville, the Golden Panthers won't be intimidated by a mediocre Marshall squad that finished 101st in the nation in total offense and 86th in total defense. Aside from an upset of Southern Miss, Doc Holliday's Herd did very little of note this season, other than serve as an example of why there are way too many bowl games being played these days
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Wack Predict-O: Florida International 28, Marshall 17

Tuesday, December 21

Poinsettia Bowl (San Diego, CA, 7:00 PM): TCU (10-2) vs. Louisiana Tech (8-4)

It'll be a battle of champions at the Building Formerly Known as the Murph, as Mountain West

titlist TCU meets WAC kingpin Louisiana Tech. The Horned Frogs played in BCS games the last two years, nearly went to another this year and will have to work up the motivation to play the Bulldogs, who came out of nowhere to fill the vacuum left by departed conference bully Boise State. Tech's 96th-ranked pass defense will find it difficult to handle the sophomore duo of quarterback Casey Pachall (2,715 yards, 24 touchdown passes) and receiver Josh Boyce (932 yards, nine touchdowns.) This game should be a tune-up for TCU's entry into the Big 12 in 2012 .

Wack Predict-O: TCU 37, Louisiana Tech 14

Wednesday, December 22

Las Vegas Bowl (Las Vegas, NV, 7:00 PM): Boise State (11-1) vs. Arizona State (6-6)

This might be the biggest sure thing of the 2011-12 bowl season: powerful Boise, which came within a missed field goal of perhaps playing for the BCS Championship, against an Arizona State team that collapsed after a 6-2 start and saw head coach Dennis Erickson forced out after five seasons of inconsistency and frustrated hopes. Even allowing for the possibility of a letdown, the Broncos shouldn't have too much trouble with the disorganized Sun Devils.

Wack Predict-O: Boise State 45, Arizona State 12

Thursday, December 24

Hawaii Bowl (Honolulu, HI, 7:00 PM): Southern Miss (11-2) vs. Nevada (7-5)

Chris Ault did one of his best coaching jobs this season, guiding the young Wolf Pack through a 1-3 start and into their seventh straight bowl appearance. As always Nevada has one of the nation's top rushing offenses; the 'Pack also boast a prolific receiver in Rishard Matthews, who snagged 91 balls for 1,364 yards and was also a deadly punt-return specialist. Southern Miss

counters with one of the most opportunistic defenses in America and has some offensive firepower of its own in senior quarterback Austin Davis (3,331 yards, 28 touchdowns) and a deep corps of receivers. Larry Fedora has accepted the head-coaching job at North Carolina but will stay on and coach the Golden Eagles in the bowl game.

Wack Predict-O: Southern Miss 34, Nevada 24