Close might be matter in horseshoes and hand grenades, but I've found that actually hitting your target usually returns the best results. It's true in sports, and it's applies in life. Losing a close game still means you lost, and almost getting the job means you didn't get the job.

Sometimes, something might present itself as what you hope it is, but a closer look can tell you the brutal truth.

On the surface, the whole world of College Football has earned itself a giant cookie for applying common sense, and evolving towards the proper solution for crowning a champion. On the other hand, I can cite only unfathomable levels of stubborn to understand why anyone would cut a good idea short before they're even halfway to righting and undeniable wrong.

Make no mistake about it, the process of selecting just two teams for a title shot, in a faction as large as what we now call the Bowl Subdivision of Division I NCAA Football, is a borderline criminal act.

In the past decade and a half, we've had some interesting dialogue, some heated debates, and most of all, some inconsistency. If you'll concede that this whole system is based on the absence of common sense, it's the inconsistency that bothers me the most.

For example, perfection is the best thing you can for, but the reward for such an effort varies, depending on geography, and even chronology.

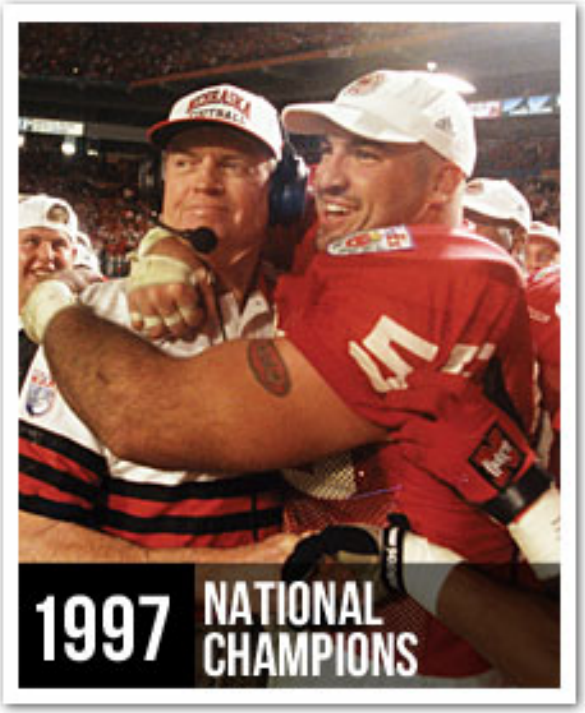
The ultimate prize is awarded for perfection in Tuscaloosa and Austin, but perfection equals participation awards in Idaho and in Fort Worth.

At a school like Auburn, six years can change the meaning of undefeated from "Good Effort, Good Job" to "National Champions".

What is a National Champion, anyways? To data, it's only ever been a term of mythical proportions. It isn't even a term that necessarily is attached to one team exclusively; the dreaded split title isn't commonplace, but most of us aren't foreign to the idea. The only other sport that was ever popular in this country that is this murky about its champion would be the

Alphabet Soup worthy collection of governing bodies in boxing, a sport that hasn't been popular since the creation of the Internet.

Without a definitive process to determine a champion, various polls declared various results, which has opened the door for a sportswriter's agenda to trump merit.



That happened in the sixth season that the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) existed. In the year before its inception, Michigan and Nebraska split their claim to the title.

Perhaps, that occurrence was the motivating factor behind creating a system that put the alleged top two teams on the field, but there were no absolutes in the plan, and we rarely saw and undisputed 1 and 2 on the field.

Some would use the word "progress" to describe the evolution of College Football into a system that dissolved the traditional Rose Bowl matchup, and exposed Top 2 teams from the Big Ten or Pac 10 to potential matchups with SEC, Big XII, ACC, and Big East juggernauts.

The plan included a Yellow Brick Road clause specifically for Notre Dame, but the off-brand schools were never guaranteed much more than a high-profile exhibition game, certainly not a title shot. Those exhibitions, also known as the other BCS Bowls, were nothing more than an unvite; which is an invitation that is extended with the underlying hope that the invitee would not attend (and hopefully send a gift).

When a regular season yielded a definite #1 and a definite #2, College Football and its bride,

the BCS, created a utopia. The one game for all of the marbles included the right teams, and, at the end of the day, we recognized that the last man standing was the very best the game had to offer. It's simply easier for all us to read what's in black and white, and when that's all we see, we pretend the gray area doesn't exist.

Year One provided a gray area in the #2 slot, with an undefeated Tennessee in the top spot, the system had to determine whether UCLA, Ohio State, or Florida State had the 1-loss that was easiest to overlook. The 1999 season provided bliss because Virginia Tech and Florida State were the only undefeated teams, but that was only enabled because Nebraska slipped up at Texas early in the year. Whether the nation liked Ohio State being there or not, we saw the closest thing to a clear cut 1 & 2 in 2002.

It was 2010 before the BCS National Championship featured the game's only unbeaten teams.

If you're scoring at home, that's three perfect scenarios in 14 years in the system.

I really don't know what I would consider to be worse, a split title or a perfect team without any claim to a title. Maybe, we lower the bar a little bit, and compromise to accept anything else. It's our ability to turn the other cheek when we get a 2-loss champion, or have to watch a Championship with a questionable participant.

The system doesn't work when the Championship mandates who the #1 team is in the Coaches Poll, but the Associated Press can revolt and select USC.

The system doesn't work when Utah, Boise State, Hawaii, and TCU go undefeated, and leave us to wonder if they belonged on the field with the team we're told to call Champions.

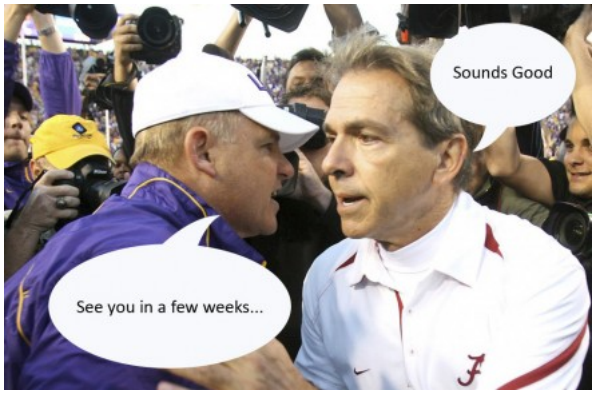
The good news is that we all know that the system is about to die. And, I don't know if it's bad news, but what the hell took them so long?

For years and years, I rooted for chaos to initiate change.

For years and years, there either wasn't enough chaos, or the suits were too busy counting their money to acknowledge the possibility of chaos interrupting their wealthy lifestyles.

Do we look back at the 2011 season, and recognize factors that were new and unique enough to get the people that matter back to the drawing board? Was there something specific that exclaimed, "We cannot continue to do it this way"?

Was it just the events of the past year that dropped common sense into their lap, or divine intervention?



Nick Saban's Alabama Crimson Tide were afforded the opportunity to play for the title against an LSU team that beat them in their own backyard. The other eligible suitor for the big game was an Oklahoma State team that lost at Iowa State late in the season.

The truth is that Alabama lost to the only team that the consensus had determined was better than them, while Oklahoma State lost to a team that may not have been the second best team in Iowa.

In a vacuum, no one would have a problem with this, but some would have had you believe that giving Alabama a mulligan (a do-over) was a crime against humanity.

The unexpected Oklahoma State loss gave Alabama new life for a title shot, and this helps those who argue about preserving the regular season, but the system we are about to enter into would have forgiven that Friday night loss in Ames, Iowa.

The new criteria allows for twice as many teams to get a chance at a National Championship, but just last year, the difference between #2 and #5 was almost negligible.

There are about 115 teams with a weaker case for a seat at the table than the #5 team, but that team will be nothing more than one with the distinction of being the best on the outside looking in. I know you need to draw the line somewhere if you don't want a 120 team tournament that ends in May, but #9 has less of a gripe than #5. What's scary about going with a eight team playoff is that it takes us back to the original number of teams selected for the BCS, as if participating in one of the three meaningless brand-name Bowls was anything special.

Who ends up in an 8 team playoff? And, it's probably just as noteworthy to inquire about who

ends up out of an 8 team playoff? It's the same conversation that everyone is currently having about what's what in a 4 team playoff, except this a way to continue to keep the cartel in mind, even if the cartel ends up being one Big East Conference lighter. I could definitely see an undefeated team being left out, if they don't carry the right conference pedigree.

Don't forget this is a game that had two undefeateds looking in from the outside in 2004, but didn't pit them against each other.

It's also a game that had ten slots that could have gone to a long list of qualifying teams, but predictably plucked Virginia Tech and, worse yet, Michigan from the bottom of the list.

This type of brand-name recognition is the best reminder of how power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Given the margin for error that an eight team playoff invites, I'm not only cautious about the possibility of someone doing the wrong thing; I'm confident that it would happen. There is a suggestion, if not a demand, for transparency with the process, but how do you create a system that cannot be spun into whatever is convenient for the characters that count the money.

At the end of the day, that's all that matters and I'm not mad about it.

The selfish fan in me only wants the best product possible.

The most transparency exists in a system that leaves the fewest amounts of decisions up for debate.

In my mind, a 16-team playoff is the right answer, and it's the only right answer. Everything else is a half-measure, which is to say that it's not enough to offer what I'd consider a solution.

It's like putting ketchup on a steak, and telling me that you've added flavor to it, the act of doing something just to be able to say you've done something.

I might consider a man who showers once a week to be cleaner than a man who never showers, but I very much doubt that I'd ever classify either individual as clean.

I also doubt that I can ever consider anything less than a 16 team playoff to be "clean".

With eleven conferences in the subdivision, this number is what it takes to give everyone a piece of the pie, and more importantly, every school controls their own destiny. While the odds of winning are stacked higher against them than anyone could even calculate, technically, Northern Illinois or Florida Atlantic could actually play their way to a title.

Technically, chaos doesn't screw as many things up, which potentially devastating news for the fans of chaos that I know are out there.

It's a simple template, really. The Conference Champions from the Big 6 are granted the top 6 seeds and opening round home games at campus sites. Only because I have to walk a mile in the shoes of the greedy to sell this, I'm putting the Conference Champs outside of the cartel in the 11-16 seeds, guaranteeing us no games in Muncie or Moscow.

That leaves five vacant slots in the field, four wild-cards from the privileged world of automatic qualifying conferences would occupy the 7, 8, 9, and 10 seeds, and the open spot in the bottom 6 would preferably go to a wild-card from the mid-major universe.

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