The college football season begins in just a few weeks with a full slate of games of Labor Day weekend. It's a weekend to be looked forward to with more than a little bit of ambiguity.

That ambiguity comes in the wake of All-American defensive back Tyrann Mathieu's dismissal from the LSU team for "violation of team policies," meaning repeated failure of drug tests . I don't know Tyrann Mathieu and I have no inherent problem with recreational drug use, but I have to ask: if not for football, would this kid be anywhere near a college campus?

There is no other sport as transparently corrupt as college football, and the most striking thing is how *shamelessly* corrupt it is at every level- the bowl system, the coaching fraternity, the players; every aspect. Corruption in this sport is expected and accepted. Everyone knows coaches cheat. Everyone knows that the term "scholar-athlete" is a sham.

The corruption is endemic, because the concept of big-time college football is inherently contradictory. It's basically a semi-pro sports system run by institutions that really have no business being in that business to begin with. Because of this contradiction, the business of big-time college football is a business that dare not speak its name. If it isn't supposed to be a business but is, that makes it a racket. That's what big-time college football is. It has all of the purity of the porn industry, and none of the honesty.

So why the ambiguity? Because it's a great game to watch. That's the reason. It isn't a very profound reason, but there it is. And best believe that when it begins again on the field in a few weeks, I will make my own compromise and watch the living crap out of it like I always do. Let's do it.

Conference Confusion

It's getting to the point where you can't tell the conferences without a scorecard. 2012 is only another phase in a game of musical chairs which shows no signs of ending soon, as schools big and small pick up stakes and move on to what they hope will be greener pastures.

All of this movement can get a little bit confusing. So, in the interests of clarity, I've charted the comings and goings of every shift in each of the FBS conferences. Of course, this chart won't be current for long- the changes will continue into next year and beyond.

Southeastern Conference

Joined: Missouri, Texas A&M

Departed: None. Are you kidding me? This is God's Conference, who would want to leave?

God's Conference is up to fourteen teams, thanks to its poaching of two Big 12 schools. Texas A&M's reason for defecting was similar to Nebraska's last year- resentment and fear of the University of Texas's domination of the conference. Missouri just wanted to make sure it didn't get caught out in the cold in case the Big 12 imploded entirely.

I'm not sure how big of a coup this really was, though. Obviously getting a foothold in the vast Texas market is a good thing, but A&M hasn't been nationally relevant for well over a decade.

Missouri has a respectable football tradition but probably won't be among the SEC elite.

Still, it's too bad the Big Ten was unwilling to bring in Missouri last year. The former is simply a superb fit both from a geographic and, with its solid basketball pedigree, an athletic standpoint. Missouri would have fit the Big Ten better than any other school the conference could have brought in, including Nebraska. Oh well.

Big 12 Conference

Joined: West Virginia, TCU

Departed: Missouri, Texas A&M

Surprisingly for a conference that looked to be on the verge of extinction at this time last year, the Big 12 continues to live, breathe- and expand. TCU is a natural fit, a school with deep roots in the old Southwest Conference and long-standing rivalries with Texas, Baylor and Texas Tech. West Virginia is not so much, with Morgantown being a 15-hour drive from its closest Big 12 rival. Competitively and aesthetically, however, the Mountaineers fit like a glove- Dana Holgorsen is a former assistant coach in the Big 12 and his team's frenetic passing offense will look very familiar in the far Midwest.

Big East Conference

Joined: Temple

Departed: West Virginia