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Two misconceptions in college sports

By Gregg Easterbrook
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Charlie Weis and Bobby Bowden had to go -- Notre Dame and Florida State weren't winning every game! Get rid of the bums! All we heard from sports commentators, and from alums and boosters, was get rid of the bums, we gotta win, win, win. Sorry to interject, but why? Why does Notre



Dame or Florida State or any university need to win every game? Is it now official that big colleges care more about sports than education?



If an NFL team, which is strictly a commercial enterprise in the business of providing entertainment, doesn't win, get rid of the bums. But a university exists to educate; winning football games is a secondary concern. Don't get me wrong. I attend way too many college football games, and I always like it when the school I'm rooting for wins. But I am not so misguided as to think that a college's winning games means more than a college's educating students, including athletes. Why is this distinction

practically absent from sports commentary?

Maybe the sports artificial universe won't face the uncomfortable reality that the NCAA system uses football and men's basketball players to generate revenue and great games -- then tosses way too many of these players aside uneducated. It's a lot more fun to talk about winning and losing than to talk about education.

Perhaps you're thinking, first, football players at big colleges are not being taken advantage of because they are being prepped for the NFL; and second, academics-oriented "smart schools" don't do well in sports, so if a college wants to win, standards must be low. Both of those assumptions are wrong.

Prepped for the NFL? Each year, roughly 2,500 Division I football players leave college because they have exhausted their athletic eligibility, or are leaving early, or have graduated. Each year, about 200 rookie players make NFL rosters. Thus, more than 90 percent of Division I football players never play a down in the NFL. Take into account that some of the NFL rookies are Division II, Division III or NAIA players, and it's closer to 95 percent. Watch any top college football team -- the players are fast, muscular, and obviously devote tremendous amounts of time and energy to football. Ninety-five percent of them won't play in the NFL. If they don't study and don't go to class, they walk away from college football practically empty-handed.

TMQ CHEAT SHEET



Gregg Easterbrook on ...

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Is it different at the very top? Lisa Brooks and Matt Willis of ESPN Stats & Information looked at the national championship teams of 2000, 2001 and 2002 -- the best football colleges of those years, with enough time passed to determine what kind of NFL outcomes the teams produced.

Oklahoma, the 2000 national champion, sent two players into the NFL for five or more years (that's a "career" in sports terms), six players for two to four years, and one player for one year. Of the 85 scholarship holders on that team, 11 percent advanced to the NFL. The rest went away empty-handed in football terms. Remember, this was the best team of 2000.

Miami, the 2001 national champion, was among the most talented collegiate squads ever, with a roster that included Andre Johnson, Vince Wilfork, Clinton Portis, Ed Reed, Bryant McKinnie, Jonathan Vilma, Sean Taylor and Jeremy Shockey. That team sent 20 players to the NFL for at least five years, 12 for two to four years, and four for one year. This was one of the most talented college football teams ever assembled, and almost two-thirds of its players never played a down in the NFL.

Ohio State won the 2002 crown, and produced 11 players who were in the NFL for five years or more, 16 who played two to four years, and seven who played for one season. Again, this was the year's best college football team, and almost two-thirds of its players never played an NFL down.

Brooks and Willis looked at USC between 2002 and 2004 -- a period of very strong teams, including the 2004 squad, which won the BCS championship. In those three seasons, USC produced 12 players who were in the NFL five years or more, 15 players who were in the NFL for two to four years, and 13 who had single-season stints. Approximately 120 individuals had football scholarships at USC during that period; again, about two-thirds never played an NFL down.

Brooks and Willis also checked out Nick Saban's 2002-2004 LSU teams, including the 2003 team that won the BCS title. (Saban has not been at Alabama long enough to assess how his recruits there will do in the pros.) From those LSU years, 11 players played at least five seasons in the NFL, 10 played two to four years, and three played one year. That means 80 percent never played an NFL down.

It's simply not true that playing football at a big-deal college grooms you for the NFL. Coaches sometimes encourage this illusion -- which lures players into giving their all to the team, only to discover, too late, that college is over, the NFL didn't call, they didn't attend class and are not prepared for success in life. A couple of weeks ago, Saban told reporters he got the Crimson Tide fired up for its game against mega-underdog Chattanooga by warning players, "You would someday be an NFL player in a Mercedes-Benz and roll your window down to talk to a pretty girl and she'd say, 'You lost to Chattanooga when you played at Alabama.'" The overwhelming majority of the players on the current Alabama roster will never be an NFL player in a Mercedes-Benz. Encouraging that illusion improves Alabama's football results, while potentially distracting players from studying. Yet studying means a lot more to the typical Crimson Tide player's future than football.



Nick Saban demonstrates how to take a snap. Too bad he won't demonstrate how to find a career if you don't make the NFL and didn't study in college.

One reason the system is so skewed is that big-college football coaches aren't rewarded for player graduations, they are rewarded for wins. Boosters don't care if the players graduate, they only care about victories -- and most football-factory coaches are in effect employees of the boosters, not of the university. If Saban creates a pleasant fantasy for his players that they are headed to the NFL, Saban's income rises. Future incomes for the majority of players decline if they fall for the fantasy and don't study.

In the past two decades, there's been a race to the bottom, in which many football-factory schools have lowered academic standards for football and men's basketball, dropping any pretense of education in pursuit of wins. (NCAA strictures govern whether a player can become a college athlete; colleges or conferences generally impose their own rules about whether athletes, once admitted, remain eligible; some big universities now define a football player taking a half-load of courses pass/fail as a "college student.") [Here](#), "Outside the Lines" details how, at Florida State, a suspiciously high percentage of football players have been classified as learning disabled, which creates exemptions from already lax academic requirements. The lowering of

standards in pursuit of wins is incredibly cynical on the part of big universities -- not only do hardly any of the players at colleges that don't focus on educating athletes advance to careers in the NFL, the recruiting pitch could be, "Come here and we'll never make you go to class."

Notre Dame was among the few prominent holdouts, insisting its football players be students too. This generated a recruiting disadvantage -- and a recruiting disadvantage caused by high standards, not Weis suddenly forgetting how to coach, is the reason for the recent records of Notre Dame football. Notre Dame alums and boosters should have been proud that high standards keep the school from going 12-0!

What about the other commonly heard claim -- that "smart schools" can't win in football and men's basketball? Cal, Georgia Tech, Navy, Nebraska, Northwestern, Stanford and TCU -- all academics-first colleges where football players are more likely to attend class -- are on their way to bowl games. Most of them have been in the top 20 nationally this season, and Georgia Tech and TCU even made BCS bowls. Notre Dame would be headed for a bowl game too, if it weren't for athletic director Jack Swarbrick's bizarre notion that winning "only" six games is something to be embarrassed about. Villanova and William & Mary just met in the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs, while Coe, Illinois Wesleyan and Johns Hopkins made the Division III playoffs.



Villanova bested William & Mary in a battle of academics-first colleges in the NCAA playoffs.

Penn and Amherst also would have advanced to the playoffs, if the Ivy League and the New England Small College Athletic Conference did not prohibit member schools from sending their football teams to the postseason. It is simply not true that colleges where football players study hard and go to class can't have winning seasons.

Reader Natasha Lettis of Oakland, Calif., provides this troika of stories about academics being enforced in the Cal football program: One player gave up his starting position because a class he requires for graduation [conflicts with practice](#); another was suspended for a game [for missing class](#); [this article](#) assesses Cal's overall commitment to blending academics and football. Cal's example shows that a football-factory school can enforce academic rules and still have a great season -- Cal finished 8-4 and will face Utah in the Poinsettia Bowl.

Is this autumn some kind of fluke? No. Last year, Boston College, Cal, Georgia Tech, Navy, North Carolina, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Rice, TCU, Vanderbilt and Wake Forest made bowls. Colgate, Villanova and Wofford made the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs, while Case Western, Occidental and Wheaton of Illinois made the Division III postseason. Harvard and Trinity (Conn.) would have made the playoffs, except for Ivy League and NESCAC rules. All these are academics-come-first schools.

The field for last season's NCAA men's basketball tournament included Boston College, Butler, Cal, Cornell, Duke, North Carolina, Purdue, UCLA, Villanova and Wake Forest. In the women's tournament, Cal, Dartmouth, Duke, Georgia Tech, Lehigh, North Carolina, Notre Dame, Stanford, TCU, Villanova and Vanderbilt made it. Brackets for the men's Division III basketball playoffs included Amherst, Brandeis, Carnegie Mellon, Claremont McKenna, Middlebury, MIT, RIT and Washington in St. Louis (which repeated as champion). In Division III women's basketball, Amherst, Bowdoin, Brandeis, Rochester and Washington-St. Louis all made it. All of these schools enforce academic standards for athletes.

Smart schools dominate the [Directors' Cup standings](#) of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics. For Division I sports, Stanford has won the Cup 14 times; in Division III, Williams has won 11 times. North Carolina, Penn State, Princeton, UCLA and Virginia are other smart schools that perennially finish high in the Cup standings for Division I; Amherst, Bowdoin and Middlebury perennially finish high in

Division III. The Directors' Cup honors overall athletic success, across the spectrum of collegiate sports. And smart schools do really well -- in many cases better than sports-factory colleges that channel far more money into athletics than the smart schools.

A college can field winning football teams and still have strict academic standards for players; in turn, because the overwhelming majority of players (even at football-factory schools) will never advance to the NFL, they must go to class! Why does the sports universe shy away from discussing these core points?

In fact, athletics can even help improve academics. Studies have shown that in high school, male members of sports teams have better grades than male students as a whole. Some critics have suggested this outcome is deceptive, owing to "self-selection" -- the sort of boys with the work habits to be on time for sports practices are also the ones likely to do their homework. Over the last generation, girls and women have entered organized sports in large numbers. If athletic activity improves grades, female academic performance would be expected to rise. And that's exactly what has happened. Girls' GPAs in high school, and women's graduation numbers in college, are way up.



Studies of girls' sports indicate athletics should improve, not adversely affect, academic outcomes.

[This important study](#) by Betsey Stevenson of the University of Pennsylvania tests the relationship between Title IX, which led to an increase in girls' and women's sports, and female academic and professional outcomes. (The link is to her draft; the final version is upcoming in the Review of Economics and Statistics.) She found that every 10 percent increase in participation in girls' high school athletics leads to a 1 percent increase in girls' college attendance and a 2 percent increase in women's workforce presence. Further, Stevenson finds that "greater opportunities to play sports leads to greater female participation in previously male-dominated occupations, particularly for high-skill occupations." It wasn't just that girls who were likely to be good students also tried out for the field hockey team. The same fraction of girls likely to be good students always existed -- becoming athletes *improved* their college and career prospects. Sports made them better students and more successful in the workplace.

Stevenson's findings have not made a major splash -- maybe her work has simply gone unnoticed. But evidence that athletics actually *improve* academic performance makes the lack of academic focus in much of big-deal college sports all the more wrong. This won't change until college and university boards and regents stop shirking their duties -- and until the sports media stop covering college sports as though the sole thing that mattered was winning.

In other sports news, if ever a lineman was going to receive the Heisman Trophy, it was Ndamukong Suh. Since he didn't win, TMQ renews the suggestion I've made before, that the name of the award be changed to the Heisman Trophy for the Running Back or Quarterback Who Receives the Most Publicity. Seventy-five of these trophies have been handed out -- never once to a lineman. We're supposed to believe that every year for 75 years, the best player in college has been a quarterback or running back -- that a lineman has *never* been the best player? John Heisman himself, who played offensive tackle in college, would not be considered for his own award.



John Heisman, a lineman, would not be seriously considered for his own trophy.

And in other sports news, TMQ has been hesitant about the Chargers and Vikings, but both looked like Super Bowl contenders on Sunday. Eight straight wins for San Diego, which has great offensive line play, a cocky quarterback and a fabulous defensive front (see below). Suddenly Dallas must win against undefeated New Orleans on Saturday night if the Collapse-Boys hope to reach the playoffs. Meanwhile, suddenly the Cincinnati at San Diego game Sunday is key to the fates of both teams. The Vikings, who improved to 7-0 at home, pretty much toyed with the Bengals, and showed power on both sides of the ball. Two of the Vikings' final three games are on the road. It's possible -- not likely, but possible -- that Green Bay could pass Minnesota for the division lead, and Brett Favre could end up back at Lambeau Field in the playoffs. Now there's a TV ratings record waiting to happen.

And speaking of TV ratings records, what if 18-0 Indianapolis meets 18-0 New Orleans in the Super Bowl? A few people would watch. Tuesday Morning Quarterback continues to think both teams are better off losing a regular-season game -- getting the monkey off their backs, while renewing their competitive drive. A Colts loss could give the starters something to play for down the stretch -- otherwise it'll be a month before the next Indianapolis game that means anything to the Colts. A Saints loss could remind this wacky young team that they are not invincible; in consecutive weeks, New Orleans has nearly been taken down by Washington and Atlanta, both losing clubs. But should an 18-0 Indianapolis team meet an 18-0 New Orleans team in Miami, a few people might watch.



Is it November yet?

Stats of the Week No. 1: Indianapolis has won 22 of its past 23 games, with the sole loss an overtime game in which the Colts never had an offensive possession in the OT period.

Stats of the Week No. 2: In the past four seasons, San Diego is 16-0 in December, while Dallas is 5-10. (Dallas has one less December outing, owing to the timing of a Thanksgiving game.)

Stats of the Week No. 3: Since the start of the 2008 season, the Browns are 3-4 at night and 3-19 in day games.



Stats of the Week No. 4: Miami is 6-0 in December under Tony Sparano.

Stats of the Week No. 5: Tennessee is on an 8-0 run against NFC teams.

Stats of the Week No. 6: Jersey/A scored 38 points, gained 512 yards, and lost on Sunday.

Stats of the Week No. 7: A Texas high school football team scored 88 points, gained 732 yards, and lost. (See below.)

Stats of the Week No. 8: Seattle has two wins by a combined score of 69-0, and three losses by a combined score of 96-19.

Stats of the Week No. 9: On "Monday Night Football," Arizona had three times as many turnovers, penalties, sacks, punts and blocked kicks (total of 27) as points (nine).

Stats of the Week No. 10: For his career, Peyton Manning has 225 touchdown passes and 23 interceptions in the red zone.

Cheerleader of the Week: Lindy Koucky of the Broncos, who according to [her team bio](#) is a student at the University of Colorado at Boulder and hopes to become an orthodontist. Also, according to her team bio, under the rubric of "best advice to kids," she has a good line: "There are no shortcuts to any place worth going."

Sweet Plays by a 13-0 Team No. 1: The Saints are leading a charmed life this season. Leading Atlanta 10-6, with a third-and-goal on the Falcons' 3, New Orleans sent out four receivers while Atlanta dropped eight into coverage. How can eight guys fail to defend the relatively small area of the end zone? Two covered Robert Meachem, three covered Jeremy Shockey -- and no one at all covered Marques Colston. Result? Touchdown. The Saints even have sweet failed plays! With New Orleans leading 26-23, and the ball on the Atlanta 15-yard line, the Saints lined up for a field goal attempt. It was a fake -- a first down or touchdown would have iced the game -- but the fake was to *an offensive lineman going deep*. Guard Carl Nicks, who reported eligible as a blocking back, sprinted to the end zone but was covered -- incompletion. You've gotta love a team that sends a lineman deep for a pass!



Lindy Koucky of the Broncos, who could increase the popularity of dentistry.

The incompletion was thrown by holder Mark Brunell, the Boy Scouts' 39-year-old backup quarterback, and was his first NFL pass attempt since 2006. Is this the Achilles heel of New Orleans? Should Drew Brees get hurt, the reins go to Brunell. As for the Falcons, this injury-depleted team kept it close until the end. Since taking the field for last season's opening-round playoff game, the Falcons are 6-8.

Sweet Plays by a 13-0 Team No. 2: Indianapolis has reached first-and-goal 27 times this season and scored

22 touchdowns. That's sweet. Blocking was perfect Sunday each time Indianapolis drew near the Denver goal line. Peyton Manning stood unhindered, scanning the field. Once, Indianapolis showed a very tight three-man bunch, a set it hadn't shown this year. The result was a touchdown to Austin Collie on a Wes Welker-style spin route. Once, Indianapolis lined up with three tight ends, plus linebacker Cody Glenn in the backfield; Denver responded with an unusual 7-4 alignment. The result was a play-fake, and tight end Dallas Clark simply ran an out and no one covered him! For the final Indianapolis touchdown, also from in close, the Colts had linebackers Glenn and Gary Brackett in as extra blockers. The result was a play-fake, and again no one covered Clark on a simple down-and-out. On the field for that final Colts touchdown were five undrafted players (Brackett, Jeff Saturday, Gijon Robinson, Ryan Lilja and Kyle DeVan) plus a player previously waived by another NFL team (Glenn). What is in the water in Indianapolis?

Best Replay Play: Watch the replay of [Derrick Mason's 62-yard touchdown reception](#).

As he catches the ball, he is hit simultaneously by two Detroit defenders, one in front and one in back. The two defenders bounce off him and tumble to the ground: Mason is left standing and runs to the house. If either one of the defenders had hit him alone, he would have fallen; because they both hit at once from opposite sides, he couldn't fall!

Sour Play of the Week: If you like points, you came to the right game when Philadelphia played at Jersey/A, a game that included four touchdowns of at least 60 yards. DeSean Jackson caught a 60-yard touchdown pass when no one from the Giants bothered to cover him deep; that was pretty sour. Domenik Hixon caught a 61-yard touchdown pass when the Eagles big-blitzed. He took a quick hitch, and no one bothered to tackle him; that was pretty sour. Sheldon Brown of the Eagles went 60 yards for a touchdown on a fumble recovery when center Shaun O'Hara was the sole Giant who bothered to pursue. Brown started waving the ball in the air at the Jersey/A 45-yard line -- and got away with it because no one was chasing him. Extremely sour. Donovan McNabb has now won 11 of his past 15 starts against the Giants.

Sweet 'N' Sour Play: The team that always wins in December (San Diego) faced the team that always loses in December (Dallas) -- what did you think would happen? Bolts leading the Collapse-Boys 10-3 late in the second quarter, Dallas reached first-and-goal on the San Diego 4. Marion Barber off-tackle right to the 1; Barber off-tackle right no gain; Barber off-tackle right no gain; Barber off-tackle right no gain, and one of the sweetest goal-line stands in years was complete. The CBS announcers gushed about the tackles made by San Diego linebacker Brandon Siler, a well-known player who went to Florida, a glamour college. The key to the three stops was that undrafted defensive tackle Jacques Cesaire of Southern Connecticut State perfectly "submarined" the Dallas offensive line, driving underneath to knock down blockers so the linebackers could move in. As for Dallas -- the same play was called four consecutive times. That's [a Sour Warhead](#).

A Shopping Mall That Moves -- No Thanks: Last week, the Oasis of the Seas, the world's largest cruise ship, left Fort Lauderdale on its maiden cruise. At 225,000 tons, the ship is twice the mass of a Nimitz-class supercarrier and five times the mass of the Titanic. With 16 stories above the deck, this ship looks seriously top-heavy -- let's hope the hull engineering is right. She'd be even taller but, because it's built in Finland, she had to pass under the Great Belt bridge near Zealand. Opulent? You betcha: every restaurant and shop imaginable, plus night clubs, swimming pools, Broadway-style theaters and [an outdoor water theater](#). TMQ isn't a cruise person -- give me a mountain chalet any day. What's weirdest about many cruise ships is that practically everything is indoors: basically you're inside a building that's moving. Oasis of the Seas takes this weirdness to an extreme, since nearly all the ship is superstructure. It's a hotel and mall that are moving. A "vacation" is shopping while floating? No thanks.



The Oasis of the Seas -- a 225,000-ton self-propelled argument against materialism.

The next mega-ship in the works is [Utopia](#), a mere 105,000 tons of floating townhomes. The super-rich will buy 200 private residences aboard the vessel, ranging from 1,000 to 6,000 square feet, then pay stiff fees for butlers, room service, personal shoppers and helicopters to the boat. Utopia endlessly will cruise among the sites of major world events -- the Cannes Film Festival, the Super Bowl and so on. [Here's the floor plan](#) of a Royal Cup Estate within the ship. The theory is that the super-rich will simply live aboard the ship, or spend extended periods aboard, treating their owned areas as vacation homes. Yours truly wouldn't want to live aboard a cruise ship if they paid me to. And if the super-rich feel guilty about spending millions of dollars per year to sip champagne in a floating luxu-home? Just call [the philanthropy concierge](#).

Note That Strange Swirling Blue Lights in the Sky Coincided with Start-up of the Large Hadron Collider: When I first saw images of [the swirling blue light in the sky above Norway](#), I thought, "So what are they going to say -- swamp gas? Weather balloon?" You can believe it was a failed Russian missile test if you want. I say it was the wake of a starcruiser jumping to quadraspace, if not a doorway opening to another universe. (There are plenty of other universes in "Fringe," the "Golden Compass" books and so on.) The British government still claims the Rendelsham Forest incident in 1980 was actually the reflection of a lighthouse miles away. Trained military personnel [mistook the reflection of a lighthouse for a flying machine](#)?

Untouched Touchdown Run of the Week: No Carolina defender touched Patriots running back Kevin Faulk as he went off-tackle right, behind zone blocking with six offensive linemen on the field, for a 3-yard touchdown to tie the score in a game New England went on to win. Randy Moss has six receptions and two fumbles in his last three games, isn't blocking on running plays and pretty much seems to have turned back into Randy Moss. The Flying Elvii next play at Buffalo; New England has won 12 straight against the Bills.

"Monday Night Football" analysis: A year ago around this time -- Dec. 21, to be exact -- the Cardinals looked awful, just cover-your-eyes awful, in losing 47-7 at New England. Yet the Cardinals went on to reach the Super Bowl and held the lead in the Super Bowl with a couple of minutes remaining. So maybe it's a good sign for Arizona that the Cardinals looked cover-your-eyes awful again Monday night at San Francisco, committing seven turnovers. Arizona even had a blocked PAT that would have pulled the NFC's defending champions within a touchdown at the start of the fourth quarter. What a miserable night -- good news for Cardinals fans!

On the San Francisco side, the Squared Sevens tried an interesting defensive trick -- barely rushing the passer. Much of the time, only three linemen rushed Kurt Warner; sometimes, only two did. Opponents often blitz Warner, which forces him to throw quick slants and curls; defenses don't want to allow time for Larry Fitzgerald to get deep. But proficient quarterbacks like to be blitzed, because that means somebody is sure to be open. Because Warner expects heavy pressure, San Francisco often showed pressure, then dropped into eight-man or even nine-man coverages. With San Fran leading 10-0 in the second quarter, the 49ers rushed just two, meaning nine defenders were in coverage. Although no rusher was near Warner, you could almost hear the clock in his head -- "Three seconds; must unload football." He threw a deep out toward Steve Breaston, the kind of pattern that's usually safe against a blitz, resulting in either a completion or the ball sailing out of bounds. But Breaston was double-covered, just like every other receiver on the play, and the result was an interception. A sound defensive game plan by San Francisco, although the kind of game plan that works only once in a long while.

TMQ's Christmas List: Get your own personal [oxygen bar](#) -- not for medical reasons, but to "achieve a sense of calm" as you listen to "ethereal" music. Kids will surely enjoy [toy cell phones](#) that allow pretend texting -- become a workaholic in kindergarten! This [child's barista set](#) will allow Jennifer to playact what she will someday do with her master's degree in art history.

In Praise of High School Rules: During overtime of last week's New Orleans at Washington collision, there was a lengthy confused booth review of whether Mike Sellers of the Redskins fumbled. In overtime, there are no coaches' challenges. Thinking Sellers fumbled -- the initial ruling was down by contact -- Sean Payton called timeout, hoping the booth would signal a review, which it did, awarding the ball to the Saints. When that happened, zebras gave New Orleans its timeout back. Coaches get a timeout back after a successful challenge, but what Payton did was not a challenge; the return of the timeout made no sense and is yet another indication that many of the NFL's officials, who unlike MLB and NBA officials are not full-time, haven't memorized the rulebook.



Around the holidays, naughty is always nice.

One of the points of confusion on the play was whether an inadvertent whistle had sounded. NFL rules on this are a mishmash. Sometimes, an inadvertent whistle stops a play; sometimes, as happened Monday night in the Arizona-San Francisco contest, a fumble recovery is allowed even after an inadvertent whistle. But what if, as happened in that game, offensive players stopped on the whistle while defenders continued to play and got the benefit of not stopping? Under National Federation of State High School Associations rules, after an inadvertent whistle, the team possessing the ball at the snap has the option of accepting the result or replaying the down. That's not a perfect rule -- of course the offense will replay the down if the inadvertent whistle favored the defense. But that rule mitigates most weird impacts of inadvertent whistles and has the virtue of being the same in all cases. NFL -- adopt the high school inadvertent-whistle rule.

Yet There Is Unlimited Funding for County Officials to Have Bodyguards: Each December, [the local fire company](#) in TMQ's neck of the woods sends Santa around neighborhoods on the back of a fire engine, with sirens blaring. He hands out candy canes to children. This year, there's Santa and sirens, but no candy canes. The county budget can't be that bad!



"Hey kid, gimme back those candy canes."

The Other Sports and Academics Scandal: Not only do most football-factory colleges place too little emphasis on education for players, there is a second level of scandal: low graduation rates for African-American players. [This new study from the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports](#) at the University of Central Florida shows that of the 68 colleges which made bowl games this season:

- 21 graduated less than 50 percent of African-American football athletes, while only two graduated less than 50 percent of white football players.
- 7 graduated less than 40 percent of their African-American football players, while none graduated less than 40 percent of white football players.
- 35 had graduation success rates for African-American football athletes that were at least 20 percent

lower than their rates for white football athletes.

College is what you make it, so it's fair to ascribe some of this poor performance to players not working harder in class. Even so, the figures should shock -- half the schools appearing in bowl games this holiday season have substantially lower graduation rates for African-American football players than for white players. The boosters don't care. Do the deans, regents and coaches care?

Concussion Update: TMQ advocates mandatory downtime following concussions -- a concept the NFL has yet to adopt. John Dandy of Jackson, Wyo., notes [this article about the training staff at Mesquite High School](#), near Dallas, which two years ago imposed a minimum two-week rest period for concussions. The guidelines developed at Mesquite are being endorsed by some state associations for high school sports. Come on NFL, be a leader on the concussion issue -- don't leave the leadership role to 17-year-olds!

Shameless Self-Promotion: My next book, "Sonic Boom," about the pluses and minuses of the evolving global economy, is in stores on Dec. 29. I have my fingers crossed, because so far the pre-publication reaction is outstanding. Tyler Cowen, the economist, author and [influential blogger on economics](#) has said, "If you read Thomas Friedman's 'The World Is Flat,' you must read 'Sonic Boom,' because this book is the next step." You can pre-order "Sonic Boom" from any bookstore or online seller: Links to the main ones are at the bottom [of this page](#). Pre-orders are music to an author's ears because the initial month is important to the success of a book.

Unified Field Theory of Creep: José Jiménez Rodríguez of Santiago de Surco, Peru, writes, "In Piura, in the north of Perú, there are many posters thanking our president, Alan García Pérez, for reconstruction of the Sullana-Alamor Highway. Not only has no work on the reconstruction of the highway been completed, no work has started." Robert Goetz of Bend, Ore., notes Major League Baseball's annual winter meetings ended on Dec. 10 -- 11 days before the solstice that marks the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere. Jyri Paavilainen of Helsinki, Finland, writes, "Finland's largest newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, reported last week that tickets for the 2012 ice hockey World Cup will be available for purchase next spring -- two full years before the games. A badly machine-translated article on this [can be found here](#)."

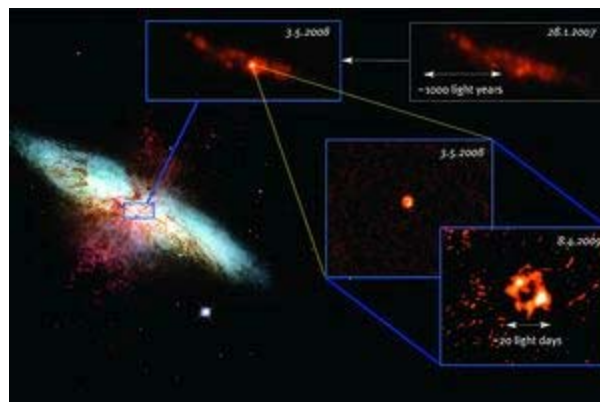


If the MLB "winter" meetings end before winter begins, shouldn't spring training start by Christmas?

Maroon Zone Plays of the Week: The Maroon Zone is the area of the field where it's too far for a field goal, but too close to punt. Green Bay went for it on fourth-and-3 on the Chicago 33, converted and scored a touchdown on the possession. Indianapolis went for it on fourth-and-4 from the Denver 34, converted and scored a touchdown on the possession. Tennessee, leading 20-0 and facing fourth-and-4 on the St. Louis 35 with 12 seconds remaining in the first half, went for it, converted and then kicked a field goal for a 23-0 margin at intermission.

Wildcat Update: Miami hasn't used the Wildcat in its past two games, as young quarterback Chad Henne continues to improve as a traditional drop-back passer. New England and Jacksonville both seemed primed to defend the Wildcat and taken aback that it wasn't used. Presumably, the Marine Mammals' next opponent, Tennessee, will expect drop-back passing -- then get hit with the Wildcat. As for the Jaguars, who have a plodding style and a league-worst eight red zone turnovers, how can they still be in the postseason hunt? In the fourth quarter of a 14-10 loss to the Dolphins, Jax twice went for it on fourth-and-3, converting neither. Miami defensive end Randy Starks made a nice stop on a Jax quarterback draw on the second fourth-and-3, icing the contest.

A Cosmic Thought: The closest known supernova to Earth in recent years, discovered by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley, resides 12 million light-years away [in a galaxy called Messier 82](#). (The detonation occurred 12 million years ago; light from the blast arrived at Earth in 2004.) The place in question is a "starburst galaxy," one in which stars are forming much more rapidly than in the Milky Way. Our galaxy contains 100 billion to 400 billion stars scattered throughout a structure about 100,000 light-years across. Messier 82 has a similar number of stars pressed into a space only a few hundred light-years wide. Rather than being separated by vast expanses of void, like the stars of the Milky Way, the stars of M82 are nearly as close together as the planets of our solar system. Messier 82 is a realm of almost unimaginable energy -- stars everywhere shining heat and radiation upon each other.



Imagine all the stars of the Milky Way squeezed into a volume far less than 1 percent as large.

One reason conditions on Earth are amenable to life is that the vast interstellar distance of the Milky Way means the sun is the sole star that affects our world, and the sun is mild-mannered and stable by the standards of stars. If there are planets in M82, they would be subjected to constant radiation bombardment from multiple stars, to say nothing of experiencing dazzling round-the-clock daylight from the dense proximity of stars.

Astronomers think Messier 82 became a "starburst" galaxy about 100 million years ago, when it nearly collided with a larger neighboring galaxy. Since then, gravitational tidal forces have been mixing things up in M82 in a way that does not occur in our galaxy. Consider: The universe appears to be about 14 billion years old, and not only are stars still forming, but in places like M82, stars are still forming so fast and in such numbers they can't be counted. We are part of a continuum of power and majesty whose full scope we barely begin to speculate upon. Who can say where the cosmic enterprise may lead?

Celebrations Are Bad -- Now Let's Show the Replay: With Cincinnati on the Minnesota 15, Chad Ochocinco lined up wide, sprinted back toward Carson Palmer as if to take a reverse handoff, then spun around and ran back into the flat where he started -- touchdown pass. When Ochocinco started running into the backfield, defenders on his side assumed reverse the other way and abandoned the area. The NFL bans orchestrated touchdown celebrations, and last week it fined Ochocinco \$30,000 for his latest. If touchdown celebrations are bad -- TMQ does not think they are -- then don't encourage them, right? After the score, on the Red Zone Channel, which is NFL-produced, host Scott Hanson said, "We're not going to break away; we'll keep it right here to see if Ochocinco does a celebration."

Heads of State Pause Their Limos at Their Personal Jets to Denounce Fossil Fuel Use: As the Copenhagen climate summit grinds on with -- big surprise! -- nothing specific agreed upon, here's my summary of what you need to know about the global warming issue, bearing in mind yours truly is the author of an [800-page book about environmental policy](#) (that book was so fast-paced, it only seemed like 700 pages):

- There is indeed a strong scientific consensus regarding climate change. The deniers simply aren't honest about this.
- The consensus is that in the last century, air has warmed by about one degree Fahrenheit while the oceans have warmed a little and become slightly acidic; rainfall patterns have changed in some places, and most though not all ice melting has accelerated.
- That consensus is significant, but hardly means there is a crisis. Glaciers and sea ice, for example, have been in a melting cycle for thousands of years, while air warming has so far been good for farm yields. The

doomsayers simply aren't honest about how mild the science consensus is.

- Predictions of global devastation -- climate change is a "profound emergency" that will "[ravage our planet](#)" -- are absurd exaggerations, usually motivated by political or fund-raising agendas.
- Climate change has serious possible negative consequences, especially if rainfall shifts away from agricultural regions.
- Global poverty, disease, dirty air and lack of clean water in developing world cities and lack of education are far higher priorities than greenhouse gas emissions.
- Smog and acid rain turned out to be far cheaper to control than predicted; the same may happen with greenhouse gases.
- The United States must regulate greenhouse gases in order to bring American brainpower, in engineering and in business, to bear on the problem.
- A carbon tax, not some super-complex cap-and-trade scheme that mainly creates jobs for bureaucrats and lawyers, would be the best approach.
- If the United States invents technology to control greenhouse gases, no super-complex international treaty will be needed. Nations will adopt greenhouse controls on their own, because it will be in their self-interest to do so. Smog and acid rain are declining almost everywhere, though are not governed by any international treaty; nations have decided to regulate smog and acid rain emissions on their own, because it is in their self-interest to do so.

As for the e-mails hacked from a greenhouse research center in the United Kingdom, e-mails are private correspondence. Copying them without permission is at the least unethical, and perhaps a crime. If you saw private letters on someone's desk, photocopied them and posted them on the Web, you would be considered a person of low character. Whoever hacked the climate e-mails is at the very least an unethical person of low character, and one should be wary of the agendas of unethical people.

That said, many climate scientists are rigidly ideological and believe dissent must be shouted down. This is partly because of money and privilege. The United States and European Union spend about \$6 billion annually on climate change research, and every penny goes to alarmism, because it can be used to justify government expansion. Being a climate doomsayer is a path to cash and tenure -- even to celebrity, as making wildly exaggerated claims got Al Gore a Noble Prize plus stock in companies now winning government subsidies triggered by alarmism. The doomsayers are lauded by foundations, go to parties with Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and attend taxpayer-subsidized conferences in Nice. They've formed a guild with intense focus on maintaining guild structure. The 1962 Thomas Kuhn book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" is best-known for introducing the "paradigm shift" concept. Kuhn's larger argument was that science is not an abstract truth-seeking realm, rather, subject to fads and what is now called political correctness, and one in which many scientists are concerned foremost with safeguarding their sinecure by toeing the line.



A Copenhagen protester passed out under the strain of verbiage.

Plus the alarmists need to divert attention from the inconvenient truth that 20 years ago, Gore and James Hansen of NASA began to say that without immediate drastic action against greenhouse gases, there would

soon be global calamities. Nothing was done -- and no problem so far. That is no reason to be complacent -- warming-caused problems may be in store. But for the self-interested alarmists, this is a reason to shout down their critics.

Footnote: John Siemieniec of West Dundee, Ill., was among many readers to note the [140 private jets and 1,200 limos at the climate summit](#). World leaders and celebrities rode in comfort to a conference to wag their fingers about how somebody else should stop wasting fossil fuel.

Pot Cancels Sponsorship Deal with Kettle: Corporate consulting firm Accenture just terminated Tiger Woods' endorsement deal, saying he is "no longer the right representative" for the firm. [Here's the announcement](#). Note the murky headline -- not "Tiger Woods Fired" but "Accenture Sponsorship Update." The firing itself can't be argued with: Woods was hired to make people think warm fuzzy thoughts, and he no longer does that. But Accenture -- you should talk! This company was spun out of Arthur Andersen, the accounting firm that essentially went out of business in 2002 after helping Enron lie about its books. (The Supreme Court later found [Arthur Andersen's legal fate too harsh](#), but Andersen self-destructed its reputation of its own volition.) Accenture lectures someone else about propriety -- that's a hoot.

Steelers Sink Slowly into the West: "We will unleash a serene, soothing cloud-nine experience," Mike Tomlin told reporters after defending champion Pittsburgh lost to 1-11 Cleveland, snapping a streak of 12 consecutive victories by the Steelers over the Browns. Godfrey Daniel, the Steelers looked bad. Game scoreless, Pittsburgh faced third-and-1 and went shotgun spread -- sack. On the next Pittsburgh possession, the Steelers faced third-and-3 and went shotgun spread -- sack. Counting sacks and scrambles, on the night Pittsburgh coaches radioed in 43 passing plays and 19 rushing plays in a game that was close till the end. If you're not even going to attempt to run the football on a cold, windy night, what other outcome than defeat do you expect? Game plans must be tailored to conditions. By the second quarter, Pittsburgh's pass wackiness had become predictable, leading to eight sacks by Cleveland. The Steelers ran possessions that ended in fourth-and-10, fourth-and-13, fourth-and-14, fourth-and-18, fourth-and-18 and a preposterous fourth-and-35. Can it really be that the *Pittsburgh Steelers* can't handle an adverse-weather game?

Maddeningly from the Steelers' perspective, their offensive numbers are better this year than last, when they won the Super Bowl. Their overall defensive numbers are almost as good. What's changed? Pittsburgh has dropped from first to 12th in pass defense, from sixth in interceptions made to 31st. Troy Polamalu is the Steelers' best player, and his absence clearly hurts the secondary. But as David Schoenfield of ESPN.com has noted, Pittsburgh is also simply not enjoying good luck this season -- and last year, Pittsburgh's luck consistently was good. Last year, the Steelers scored on turnover returns; this year, opponents are scoring on turnover returns against them. Last year, Pittsburgh was 6-2 in games decided by a touchdown or less; this year, it's 1-7 in such games. In 2008, the Steelers were healthy and had good luck; this year they're injury-plagued and having bad luck. Maybe there's not much more to it than that. But sportswriters and sportscasters don't talk much about luck, because that can't be spun as insider information. Note: After winning his first 11 NFL starts in his native Ohio, this season Ben Roethlisberger lost both his Ohio games.



Ryan Clark of the Steelers during Thursday night's game. He could have borrowed a paper bag for his head from some Browns fans.

For the Browns' part, Cleveland coaches called 21 passing plays and 36 rushing plays, which is the right kind of balance for a blustery-night situation. Josh Cribbs was terrific running the Wildcat. Football snobs may

look down their noses at the Wildcat -- it's not "real" offense like constant passing! But simple rushing plays were just what the doctor ordered for the game conditions, plus having Cribbs take the snap made the Cleveland offense 11-on-11, rather than 10-on-11 when a quarterback takes the snap then hands off.

Cribbs is always prominent on the TMQ All-Unwanted All-Pros -- upcoming after the end of the regular season (unlike the Pro Bowl, I don't choose till the season is in the books). It bears reminding that Cribbs went undrafted despite being the all-time yardage leader at Kent State and the first true freshman in NCAA annals to rush for 1,000 yards and pass for 1,000 yards. (Some of Cribbs' records were broken by Julian Edelman, also shunned by NFL scouts, and now playing well for New England.) Alex Mack, Abram Elam and Jason Trusnik performed well for Cleveland against Pittsburgh. They're players the team got in the Mark Sanchez and Braylon Edwards trades; Cleveland also acquired other young players and draft choices in the deals, which the New York press depicted as huge wins for the Jets, but revisionists may treat differently.

Buck-Buck-Brawckkkkkkk: Trailing Baltimore 10-0, and coming into the contest on a 2-26 stretch, Detroit faced fourth-and-goal on the Ravens' 3. Detroit coach Jim Schwartz sent in the field goal unit, and TMQ wrote the words "game over" in his notebook -- even though it was the second quarter. Detroit went on to lose 48-3, but Schwartz kept a shutout off his record! Fun note: Detroit has lost 19 straight on the road.

Trailing Buffalo 7-0, and coming into the contest on a 5-23 stretch, Kansas City faced fourth-and-goal on the Buffalo 4. Chiefs coach Todd Haley sent in the field goal unit, and Kansas City went on to lose 16-10. Yes, the Chiefs had failed on a fourth-and-goal at the Buffalo 1 earlier -- but that was then, this is now -- fortune favors the bold! Note 1: The biggest play of this sleep-inducing game was a punt: Buffalo's Brian Moorman punted 73 yards from the Bills' 20 to the Chiefs' 7 on the final snap of the third quarter. Note 2: Kansas City's streak of sellouts, dating back to 1990, is likely to end Sunday, when the Chiefs take on Cleveland. A Chiefs-Browns pairing should be canceled for humanitarian reasons. Note 3: The worst decision of the 2009 draft may turn out to be Buffalo's wasting the 11th overall choice on defensive end Aaron Maybin, rather than tabbing defensive end Brian Orakpo, who went 13th to Washington. Maybin has been invisible -- no starts, no sacks -- and is being whispered about on the NFL grapevine as a bust. Orakpo may get the Defensive Rookie of the Year award, if not make the Pro Bowl as a rookie. On Sunday at Oakland, he had four sacks and looked unblockable.

Trailing 19-0 in the third quarter, City of Tampa punted from the Jersey/B 42. Still trailing 19-0 in the third quarter, City of Tampa kicked a field goal on fourth-and-5 from the Jersey/B 25. The Bucs went on to lose 26-3 -- but kept a shutout off the résumé of Raheem Morris. Fun Note 1: At 3:03 p.m. ET, the Bucs recorded their initial first down. Fun Note 2: New Jersey Jets High School joined Tennessee Titans High School and Miami Dolphins High School as teams that have run the triple option this season. Be sure to order your yearbooks on time!

Reader Comments: Last week's Christmas List included this entry: "An affordable non-electronic stocking stuffer is the Newton's Cradle. I played with one as a boy; the current seller says it's 'guaranteed to follow Newton's laws of physics.' Presumably if you accelerate the toy to 99 percent of the speed of light and it starts acting all weird, you get your money back." Greg Markowsky of Pohang, Korea, retorts, "What you said about Newton's Cradle is funny, but in fact you don't need to accelerate it to get it to violate Newton's Laws. It is now accepted that Newton's Laws are simplified approximations of physical law, though in Newton's time they would have had no way of knowing this. Differences between Newton's Laws and the correct ones -- which we may still not have -- are only apparent at large speeds, or at enormous or tiny masses or distances. But none of the atoms in the Newton's Cradle toy actually follow Newton's Laws, otherwise the electrons and protons would collapse onto one another. So you should be able to get your money back right away if you bought one of these gizmos."

Jayson Bishop of Grant, Neb., writes, "You are correct that only 25 FBS schools, or 21 percent, show a profit on their overall athletic budget. However, you misrepresented where the deficits are coming from. The same

[NCAA report you cited](#) shows that 57 percent of football programs and 56 percent of men's basketball programs turn a profit. Football and men's basketball are the only athletic programs where the median college turns a profit. Those two programs generally are subsidizing the rest of the athletic department, which is where the majority of the losses come from."

Richard Mah of Calgary, Alberta, writes, "You decry football players for not wearing the best headgear available. The same applies to the other major league sport that encourages physical contact: hockey. You would be surprised at the cavalier attitude many professional hockey players take regarding their heads and their eyes. For decades it has been mandatory that any child hockey player must wear a full complement of equipment, which includes a helmet and full face mask or shield. In Canada, once reaching the major junior leagues (the main feeder system into the professional ranks), you can ditch the full mask, but you are still required to play with a visor to protect the eyes. United States colleges require players wear the full shield. Yet once players reach the pros, they can ditch any facial protection. Even though careers have been ended by those being blinded after getting hit in the face with a puck or stick, it doesn't stop players from thinking they are invincible. The NHL has been trying for years to make facial protection mandatory, but the players' union insists it should be the individual player's choice. As you say about advanced-protection football helmets -- just make it mandatory, and then no one can complain about not looking cool because everyone will have the same look."

James Roane of Ann Arbor, Mich., checked up the coaching staff of the 1967 Packers: seven people (Vince Lombardi, three offensive assistants and three defensive assistants). The current Green Bay coaching staff [has 21 people](#), including an assistant to the special teams coach. I derided LaRon Landry for wearing a wristwatch on the field -- the zebras should make him take it off, and how can the Redskins' countless assistant coaches not have noticed that he wears a watch on the field? John Martin of Dallas reports that the Redskins' many assistant coaches not only know Landry [wears a watch](#), they encourage this. Supposedly the watch reminds him that "it's time to shine." After the New Orleans game, he should wear a wristband that says in bright letters, "It's time to cover the deep man."

TMQ regularly complains about needless taxpayer-funded bodyguards for officials, including state troopers next to college football coaches. Brian Johnson of Gainesville, Fla., [points out this article](#) saying many state troopers work college football sidelines on a volunteer basis. In October I wrote, "TMQ's immutable Law of 10 Percent holds that good coaching can improve a team by 10 percent, bad coaching can subtract from performance by 10 percent -- but the rest will always be on the players." David Cohen of Brooklyn notes a recent Wall Street Journal piece by Jason Zweig which concluded of corporate management, "Changes in leadership account for roughly 10 percent of the variance in corporate profitability on average."

Finally, John Manning of Adelaide, Australia, writes, "With all the heat on the NFL over concussions, what does this say about boxing, where the ideal outcome is to concuss someone so senseless that he loses consciousness? In American football, a concussion is an unfortunate accident. In boxing, it is the object of the sport and a probable outcome." Amen. TMQ favors the banning of all forms of prizefighting. Players get hurt in football, but harm is not the intent of the game -- ballet dancers may ruin their knees or skiers break bones, but those are accidents too. There can be fantastically well-played, hard-hitting football games in which no harm occurs to any player. Boxing is about causing harm. The sport is barbaric, and the sooner it's banned the better.



Prizefighting is barbaric -- ban it.

High School Game of the Year: Reader Matt Myrick of Stanton, Texas, notes Garden City beat Strawn in last weekend's Texas high school championship for six-man football -- the version played at tiny rural schools

-- by 122-88. [The teams combined for 27 touchdowns and 48 points on tries](#). (A PAT kick counts for two [in six-man rules](#).) Don't you wish you'd been there for the 84-point second quarter?

Obscure College Score of the Week: Northwest Missouri 30, Grand Valley 23 (Division II championship). Located in Maryville, Mo., [Northwest Missouri State has 38 "ambassadors"](#) who tout the school to prospective students. Good thing they're not called "hostesses."

Trailing 30-20, Grand Valley faced fourth-and-2 on the [Northwest Missouri 4 with 4:24 remaining](#). When the Lakers booted a field goal, TMQ wrote the words "game over" in his notebook. Grand Valley had to have a touchdown in the final four minutes. The Lakers were just 4 yards from paydirt, with the chance of earning a first down without having to score. Grand Valley onside kicked after the field goal, the Bearcats recovered, and when Grand Valley got the ball back in desperation time, there were 80 yards to go. Grand Valley should have gambled for the touchdown while very close, so the tying field goal could be launched from a distance. The Lakers exchanged a roughly 50 percent chance of a touchdown (at the fourth-and-2 point) for a roughly 10 percent chance of recovering an expected onside kick. Football coaches at all levels typically make the wrong decision in this situation, kicking from point-blank range and then facing a length-of-the-field problem at the end. TMQ thinks coaches do this -- even in championship games! -- because they are more concerned about being able to say the final score was close than going all-out to win.

Bonus Obscure College Score of the Week: Mount Union 24, Wesley 7 (Division III semifinal). Located in Dover, Del., Wesley College sponsors a [Scholars Day](#) at which students make posters.

Weasel Coach Watch: Brian Kelly joins the cavalcade of weasel coaches, walking out on Cincinnati the month before the school's biggest bowl game. TMQ's immutable Law of Weasels holds: When you hire a coach who's only in it for himself, you get a coach who's only in it for himself. Kelly walked out on his commitments just before the monster bowl game his players worked so hard to reach and that meant so much to the school. Notre Dame, that's the kind of person you want running your program? Kelly bolted from Central Michigan after three years because money was waved, now bolts from Cincinnati after three years because money was waved. Does anyone seriously think he won't shaft Notre Dame if money is waved again? [Kelly misled his Cincinnati players](#), then abandoned them the instant it benefited him. He's a promise-breaker. Notre Dame, that's the kind of person you want running your program?



"I broke all my promises before. But I promise I won't break my promises this time."

TMQ dislikes that coaches get away with self-serving behavior which would never be tolerated from players. When NCAA football players transfer to a new college, they must sit out a year. There should be an equivalent rule that when an NCAA coach leaves before the expiration of his contract -- Kelly's contract ran two more seasons, though had a buyout clause -- he must sit out a year before starting the next job. This would treat players and coaches equally, while reducing the temptation for weasels like Kelly to become promise-breakers.

Americans Are Only Safe When Congress Is Not in Session: [This loopy bill](#), which would prohibit the BCS organization from calling its final contest a "championship" -- essentially, the bill classifies the word as false advertising -- passed a House subcommittee last week. That's a long way from becoming law, of course. Note the chief sponsor is Rep. Joe Barton of Texas; two of the three co-sponsors are from Texas. The loopy bill was initially thrown into the hopper in December 2008, when all of Texas was furious that the BCS computer chose Oklahoma, not Texas, to meet Florida for the title. Now the bill passes the subcommittee just as the Longhorns won a spot in this season's title contest. Should the bill actually become law, this would be a calamity for Texas football fans!



He'd better hope the Texas delegation bill doesn't become law.

Next Week: Notre Dame changes its motto from *Vitte, Dulcedo, Sipes* (Life, Sweetness and Hope) to *Nos quam celerrime nostras regulas decrescamus* (We Are Lowering Our Standards as Fast as We Can).

In addition to writing Tuesday Morning Quarterback for Page 2, Gregg Easterbrook is the author of the forthcoming "Sonic Boom," and six other books. He is also a contributing editor for The New Republic, The Atlantic Monthly and The Washington Monthly. [His Web site can be found here.](#)

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