

NCAA Football: Is there such thing as a BCS buster?

A good marketing system for making money in the business of commercialism is one that creates hype and controversy. A poor system to represent college football teams does just that. So is the BCS a good system or a bad system. It all depends on what you want to see as a fan.

Who is the BCS buster this year?

No one. At least no college division I football team will be, that is. If one football team could bust the BCS in one year's time, Utah would have been given that chance in 2004. While the BCS was set up to determine a true undisputed national champion, it did not succeed in doing that, at least in 2004. The system doesn't work. Every BCS National Champion can be disputed. As long as teams exist in the same division who do not have a shot at the National Championship from before the season even begins, this will be the case. Hype dictates who will be in the preseason rankings, which greatly determines where a team can aspire to being ranked by the end of the season. If you are not a team from a BCS conference, hype before the season will never be enough to guarantee a chance at proving yourself a national title contender. Sorry USC, despite how good you have been in the last decade, had you not been in a BCS conference you would not have had enough credentials to be National Champion in any of those years. Same team, different conference, would be different results. Point in case this year—BYU.

BYU is projected to be the BCS buster, if there is such a thing

Brigham Young University is from the Mountain West Conference. Some conference foes are admittedly weak. But just as Washington State's failures do not take away from USC's success, UNLV's ineptitude does not in any way diminish BYU's prowess. BYU is projected as a national contender this year for a reason: based on proving itself with its last two consecutive 11-2 seasons, both of which finished with bowl wins and top fifteen finishes in the polls as a result. Last year was considered a rebuilding year for BYU, and this year is not. You do the math. Any fair prognostication of what BYU is capable of will place BYU as a projected BCS buster this year. Most have. USA Today Sports Weekly, Special edition: College Football Preview '08 (<http://sev.prnewswire.com/sports/20080623/DC2581323062008-1.html>) lists BYU as one of its "elite 10 college teams" of all division I teams. ESPN's (<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=3393833>) Ivan Maisel, is watching to see if BYU's bid for a BCS game materializes. He projects that it will. ESPN's, Mark Schlabeck ranks them 14th in his preseason picks and believes the BYU motto for a "quest for perfection" will be realized. CBS Sports claims that BYU's coach, Bronco Mendenhall, "might not be overstating his teams chances," with the perfection motto. ESPN's main preseason poll listed BYU as 13th. Rivals.com (<http://collegefootball.rivals.com/content.asp?cid=815257>) has BYU in the non-BCS race roundtable discussion of their national writers as the frontrunner for a BCS run. CFN (College Football News) (<http://cfn.scout.com/2/747627.html>) is on record as reporting, "anything other than a BCS bid would be a big disappointment." Fox Sports "believes

even with a loss BYU could get a BCS invite,” depending on if college football shows as much parody as last season. But what does it all mean. BYU has stated that this year is a “quest for perfection.” But is perfection enough?

Utah already proved that a BCS buster doesn't bust the BCS in one year

BYU's rival, Utah, is not shy to remind BYU that they can do no more this year than Utah was able to do in 2004. That may be the case, but it won't stop BYU from trying. The more the door gets knocked the more likely it will get knocked down, but it will only open if the fans are pushing for it. When will the fans take the game of college football back from the BCS and give it to the teams to rule their destiny and play it out on the field? It's coming. If an underdog like BYU goes undefeated it will be the second team in this decade from outside of the BCS with a legitimate argument that no BCS team proved a better National Champion. And frankly, BYU is not the only non-BCS team to watch this year. Others might be knocking. Ideally, every team should have that right. Until some football is played we can only guess that Michigan is better than Appalachian State (Not even in the same division), for example. But since it is preseason we can only make our best guesses at this point. Utah, Fresno State, TCU are other non-BCS likely culprits who should be on the radar for a possible division championship game, but because of the need for hype going into the season, they may already be short on that hype to be on the radar for even a BCS game. The real noise needs to be made by fans.

BYU's System may just bust the BCS system

In order for one college team to beat a near impossible BCS system it would require repeating perfection—especially hard to do in the ever-changing world of college football from year to year. But if things go according to BYU's system goals this year, next year may very well be a quest to be the BCS National Champion. If this is an unrealistic goal then the BCS is an unrealistic system. The BCS better hope BYU doesn't go undefeated this year, because they are projected to be even better in the following year. Does the BCS want to be the system that tests whether BYU—the only non-BCS team with a National Championship in the past 50 years—is worthy of the mythical BCS National Champion status? BYU may make it hard for the BCS to have a choice. If the BCS legally has to leave the door open, albeit barely even a crack, BYU may be the team to beat the odds of an elitist system, as it already did that in 1984. If a non-BCS team ever does take the National Championship would that not be a more proven team than other champions, as they would have had to have done more than any predecessors? Being a fan of that team is worth dreaming for even though they are long odds. Winning while on the outside would be more significant than several wins on the inside. BYU knows because they've tasted it and their tradition is to go after that same legacy with the BCS system. If it can be done, I'm rooting for BYU being the team to do it.

College Football Fans will be the BCS buster

More realistically, if there is a BCS buster it will come in the form of fans fed up with the politics off the field. Whether the BCS monopoly gets ousted by the courts, or whether

ratings dictate a different format, a playoff system is the best way to go from here. Ironically, the playoff system would not only determine a true National Champion but it would be the best solution for college football as a whole. Bowl games would only be enhanced, especially the important ones, which under this system are being undermined by the way the BCS system encourages the addition of inconsequential bowls. A playoff would only add to the competition, the fan enjoyment would increase with more games and more meaning; it would reduce politics and provide a fair market system, which would increase competition within and throughout the conferences. It is a win all solution to represent college football teams as a whole. Individually, the cartel that is the BCS would get less, but no less than they deserve and no less than would be equitable for them to manage under the same rules everyone else would be following. Instead of the BCS winning every year, the fans would win every year. Even if a playoff system is not put in place, the fans don't have to stick with a BCS system. It is only a matter of time before the fans decide they don't want this busted system.