

## SPORTS

# Amongst gripes and complaints of the BCS, praises arise

By Chris Lafuria  
sports commentary

The NCAA football regular season has come to a close, leaving some people happy, many people disappointed, but, undoubtedly, everyone is excited. Some may be excited for the riveting matchups in this year's bowl season.

Others are anxious to watch their favorite school battle for victory. However, most of the anticipation lies within the inclination to complain and point fingers, especially from the viewpoint of Auburn, Utah and Boise State.

After the Auburn Tigers overcame the Tennessee Volunteers to capture the SEC Championship, many players squeezed oranges and celebrated what they thought would be a trip to the Orange Bowl. None of the Auburn players knew how bitter the taste could be.

The USC Trojans and the Oklahoma Sooners will combat to determine the NCAA's superior program. UCS, the winner of the Pac-10 championship and

the Sooners, who conquered the most exigent conference in college football, the Big 12, were preseason nos. 1 and 2 and finished with unblemished records. Both teams deserve a chance at the National Title.

With all of the debate over the BCS system, many people argue over who should be slated to play in the FedEx Orange Bowl. Auburn, who finished undefeated and won the most games against Top 25 teams, is out. They will face ACC champs Virginia Tech in the Fiesta Bowl.

The Utah Utes, also finishing undefeated, are out as well. Their matchup will be against the Big East Champs, Pittsburgh Panthers. Boise State, WAC champs finishing with an 11-0 record, isn't even headed to a BCS Bowl. How can so many teams finish perfect and not have a chance to win the title?

Although Utah and Boise State finished unbeaten for the year, a perfect season just isn't enough for the BCS. The fact that leaves both teams completely out of the National Championship game is the strength of their sched-

ules and, partially, because of margins of victory. Utah played only one game against a team that finished in the Top 25 while Boise State played none.

Many people debate over whether or not an arbitrary system of deciding a championship is insufficient. The BCS is a computerized analytical system dedicated to finding the Top 10 teams in the nation. Even though a mass majority of college football fans have grievances over the procedure, I feel it is the best system available.

When you look closely at Auburn, you can point out significant reasons why they shouldn't be playing for the top spot. First of all, take a look at the strength of schedule or, rather, the lack of strength. Some of Auburn's non-conference games include The Citadel and Louisiana Monroe. According to Jeff Sagarin, one of the directors of the BCS, Auburn ranks as the 62<sup>nd</sup> toughest schedule. Also, when Auburn had a shot at destroying Tennessee, a tactic that may have put the Tigers at no. 2, they give up 28 points to a team they previously thrashed, 34-10.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NHAT V. MEYER/SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

California's J.J. Arrington (30) runs against Stanford in the second quarter for the 107th Big Game held at Memorial Stadium, in Berkeley, on November 20, 2004. California defeated Stanford, 41-6.

The BCS may not rank as high as the electricity as one of the greatest inventions. Many believe that it possesses obvious flaws. When it is all said and done, the BCS is the most sufficient method available. Any thoughts of tournaments or playoffs are completely out of the question because, remember, these are also college students.

The BCS narrows the field to two teams. Two teams who are superior to the rest. Although Auburn may feel like the Clay Aiken of college football, when all is said and done, no. one is playing no. two for the National Championship.

## Peyton's place is among super elite Swim team stays on target for impressive season

By Paul Domowitch  
(KRT)

PHILADELPHIA Not since Michael Jordan has an athlete caused as many jaws to drop or as many heads to shake as the Colts' Peyton Manning has done.

He is playing quarterback this season in a way that it's never been played before and maybe never will again. He is putting up numbers previously only seen in video games and the Arena League.

"I watch him every week and it's just unbelievable," said NFL Network analyst Jim Mora Sr., who coached Manning for four years in Indianapolis. "It's like he's unstoppable. It's like he's playing perfect. I've never seen anybody play like this before. It looks like they're playing against air, like there's nobody on the other side of the line. He takes the snap and boom, he hits somebody."

With 44 touchdown passes in 12 games, it no longer is a question of if he will break Dan Marino's 20-year-old record of 48 TDs in a season, but when. It could happen Sunday against the Houston Texans or it could happen the following week against the Baltimore Ravens. But it will happen.

And that's not all. With a 126.3 passer rating, Manning is on pace to shatter the old NFL mark of 112.8 set by the 49ers' Steve Young in 1994. He also has a shot at breaking Marino's record for passing yards in a season (5,084 in '84) and the Bengals' Ken Anderson's record for completion percentage in a season (.705 in '82).

And, oh yeah. The Colts also are on pace to break the record for points in a season. They have 431 through 12 games. The '98 Vikings hold the record with 556.

"This (Colts) offense, when everything is said and done, may go down as the best offense in the history of the NFL," ESPN analyst and former Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski said. "There's still a quarter of the season left, but it's literally unstoppable right now. It will have to stop itself. Fumbles, turnovers. The timing of it is just incredible. When I go over to NFL Films (to break down tape for his 'NFL Matchup' show), the Colts are the first tape I'll plug in, because I just get excited watching it."

Keep in mind that this is a 53-year-old man who spent 16 seasons playing quarterback in the NFL. He doesn't get easily excited. But watching Manning excites him.

Hell, even players who have played against Manning get goose bumps watching him perform his air magic.

"Right now, he's as close to a football god as there is," said Bears defensive end Adewale Ogunleye, whose unit was torched for four TDs by Manning three weeks ago in a 41-10 loss. "He's playing phenomenal football. It's kind of hard to watch the game and not look at it as a fan. The way they're playing on the offensive side of the ball, it's like 'Madden 2005.' You don't see the ball touch the ground. You just see completions everywhere. And touchdowns."

Manning has completed less than 60

percent of his passes just twice this season and has completed 68 percent or better seven times. With his three-touchdown performance in Sunday's 51-24 win over Tennessee, he tied Johnny Unitas' league mark for consecutive multiple-touchdown games to start a season (12). He has thrown for 250-plus yards in eight of the Colts' 12 games.

"Watching him, it looks like he's 10 steps ahead of the defense on every play," Mora said. "And he pretty much is. It's a combination of a lot of things. For starters, him. His preparation, his work ethic, his knowledge, his intelligence, his experience. This is his seventh year in the same system with the same offensive coordinator (66-year-old Tom Moore). He's also got some really, really good players around him."

Mora hired Moore as his offensive coordinator when he took the Colts' job in January 1998. Four months later, the organization selected Manning with the first pick in the draft. Mora left after the 2001 season, but Moore stayed on as offensive coordinator under new coach Tony Dungy.

"Being with Tom for seven years has really helped Peyton," Jaworski said. "I look at quarterbacks who have had struggling careers and you just look at who their coaches have been. I've said for a long time that the quarterback position is the worst-coached position in the NFL. I base that judgment on the bad fundamentals I've seen at the position. But Tom is a terrific teacher who has developed a chemistry with Peyton. And that chemistry is perfect right now."

Moore has given Manning the kind of playcalling freedom that you don't see anywhere else in the NFL today. Manning has become a maestro in the Colts' no-huddle offense, examining the defense, then quickly selecting the play he feels will work best.

"The Colts run the most basic offense in the National Football League," Jaworski said. "They're not a team that comes out with a bunch of different personnel packages and motion and formation variations. They're pretty simple. They come out and line up. And that plays to Peyton's strength. He wants his presnap read to be crystal clear. And it's easier to do that by staying in a basic formation."

Most times, Moore signals in two plays to Manning before he walks to the line of scrimmage. If Manning thinks one of those plays will work, he'll call it. If he doesn't, he can switch to something else.

"Most of the coaches and coordinators in this league are control freaks," Jaworski said. "Not many would allow their quarterback to do what Tom Moore allows Peyton to do. It's unbelievable how much freedom he has. He can pretty much get to (call) their entire offense from the line of scrimmage. Now again, it's a simplified offense. But it doesn't take away from what they can get to at the line of scrimmage."

It's one thing for a coordinator to give a quarterback the kind of freedom Manning has. It's quite another for him to know

what to do with that freedom.

Manning processes information better than any quarterback in the league. Defenses seldom are able to fool him. He usually knows what they are trying to do and usually knows how to exploit them.

"The fact that Peyton is able to get up there at the line and make the decision as to what will work best gives them a great advantage," Mora said. "Most quarterbacks aren't smart enough to be able to do that. Or maybe they don't prepare as much as he does. But with him, it's like having a coach out there."

"Sometimes a defense will be planning to blitz and bring up its safety or linebackers a little too early, and he'll say something and they're thinking, 'Uh-oh, he's got that figured out. Now what?' It's like he's telling them, 'We know you're coming and I know how to beat you.' And most of the time he does."

When the Colts drafted Manning, they didn't think twice about starting him as a rookie. Didn't worry one iota about him "taking a beating" or "having his confidence shattered."

"We drafted him on a Saturday and when we had our first minicamp the following Friday, he went in there with the first-team offense to call plays and he's been in there ever since," Mora said. "I told him right off the bat, 'You're our guy. I don't care what you do. I don't care how many interceptions you throw. You're our guy.'"

Manning threw an AFC-high 28 interceptions as a rookie. The Colts went 3-13. A year later, he threw just 15 picks, improved his passer rating nearly 20 points and the Colts went 13-3.

"If you've got a quarterback and starting and failing as a rookie is going to do a lot of damage to him, I'm not so sure he's the guy you want for the long haul anyway," Mora said. "You've got to be (mentally) tough at that position. It's the toughest position in professional sports to play. You'd better have a tough-minded guy and a competitor and a leader. Peyton is all of those things."

He's also a guy who works as hard as his craft today as he did as a rookie. Success and a seven-year, \$98 million contract have done little to change his work ethic.

"His work ethic is absolutely incredible," Jaworski said. "After practice, he'll throw one route 40 or 50 times against different coverages just to make sure it's all been covered so that when they get in a game, everybody knows exactly what to do. That's the stuff that begins to separate players. The willingness to make that commitment to keep getting better."

Considering the numbers Manning has put up this season, it's hard to fathom how much better he can actually get.

"The last guys I can think of that took their game to this level are probably (Joe) Montana and (Troy) Aikman when they were in their prime and really in rhythm with all of their weapons," Jaworski said. "They made it look easy. "But not this easy."

## Swim team stays on target for impressive season

By Samantha Cibula  
sports co-editor

There were 11 college swim teams that traveled to the Wooster Invitational Dec. 2-4. With three full days of swimming, the eight-lane pool was rarely found desolate. The Behrend men's and women's swim teams hit the pool hoping to leave an impression on what was yet to come for the rest of the season. Rested and ready to go, Behrend went into each morning of prelims with high expectations.

"Swimming 10 new teams gave us the opportunity to race new swimmers and swim faster times," said junior captain Steve Schleicher.

For the women it was the strong swims of freshman Cyndi Morales and 10 rounds of one meter diving from Catherine Franklin that gave the ladies their highest finishes of the meet. Morales placed third in the 1650 with a time of 18:34.23. Her time leaves her chasing the ECAC qualifying time. If Morales hits the time she will be the first Behrend Lady Lion to go to the ECAC meet.

"I think with continued hard work under coach Slack's supervision the ECAC qualification time will be reachable," said Morales.

Morales' 1650 wasn't her only top finish of the meet. She finished fifth in the 500 yd. freestyle and eighth in the 400 yd. individual medley.

Franklin experienced her first diving competition in championship format. She completed 10 dives on the one-meter board, setting a new Behrend team record with 198.23 points. Franklin was followed by teammate Jenny Conrad who finished fourth with 178.50 points.

Sophomore captain Whitney Marshall also swam her way to a top ten finish. Marshall, who has posted strong times in the 200 yd. freestyle finished ninth at the invitational. Her final time of 2:03.24 just misses her record of 2:02.95. Marshall came back later in the meet to place ninth in the 200 yd. butterfly. She crushed her preliminary time of 2:30.72 in the consolation heat with the time of 2:24.57, which also is a new team record.

Freshman breaststroker Melissa Pilewski also broke into the top ten with record setting swims. Pilewski placed eighth in the 100 yd. breaststroke with a record breaking time of 1:12.76 and placed tenth in the 200 yd. breaststroke with a time of 2:39.36.

Leading the men were freshmen Matt Seiferth and divers Dan Wiltrout and Alejandro Nieto. Seiferth finished eighth in the 100 yd. breaststroke with a time of

1:02.79. He came back the last day of competition and finished seventh in the 200 yd. breaststroke. Seiferth not only placed seventh but swam two seconds faster in finals; 2:16.52.

"I was really sick the last day of the competition and was doubting my final swim in the 200 yd. breaststroke," said Seiferth. "The coaches were able to keep me positive and my teammates cheered me on throughout the race. "I ended swimming faster than I did earlier in the day."

Schleicher also pulled out a 10<sup>th</sup> place finish in the 1650 yd. freestyle with a time of 18:27.24.

"There were a lot of personal bests during the meet," said Head Coach Jen Slack. "Some of the swimmers are swimming faster than they were this time last year, which signals good things for the second half of the season."

During the meet, sophomore Anthony Spoto found himself in a swim off. After preliminaries in the 100 yd. freestyle Spoto was tied with Wooster sophomore Brandon Dugar with a time of 50.64. The two had to swim off for the eighth spot in the consolation heat. Dugar went into the event having home advantage and many fans to cheer him on. Spoto remained pumped and focused before the event.

"It was weird because so many people were cheering for him, but I had my whole team too," said Spoto. The four laps remained stroke for stroke with Spoto finishing first by .09 seconds. Spoto's time of 49.71 placed him in the consolation heat where he finished 16<sup>th</sup>.

Exciting swims, top finishes, and personal bests remained the theme of the meet. Behrend men finished eighth and the women finished ninth. Next up for the swim teams will be a training trip to Orlando, Florida.

### PREDICTION TIME

#### NFL

Have superbowl or playoff predictions?

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