

GOING TO BCS BOWL GAME

SPORTS

Orange bowl battle of the coaches

By TIM REYNOLDS
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MIAMI - When their teams last met, Bobby Bowden asked Joe Paterno how much longer he planned to stay in coaching.

Sixteen years later, the legends may have that conversation again.

Florida State (8-4) and Penn State (10-1) will meet in the Orange Bowl at Miami on Jan. 3, a game that'll mark a showdown between major college football's two winningest coaches. It's the sixth Bowl Championship Series appearance in eight years for the Seminoles, the first-ever for Paterno's third-ranked Nittany Lions.

And neither septuagenarian — Paterno turns 79 later this month, Bowden is 76 — wishes to play a starring role in the pregame hype.

"I think we just ought to forget about the Bobby Bowden-Joe Paterno relationship," Paterno said. "I think we ought to be looking at two good football teams that are going to go down there and have a chance to knock each other's brains out."

Penn State shared the Big 10 championship with Ohio State, but earned the league's automatic BCS spot by beating the Buckeyes earlier this season. The Seminoles are the lowest-ranked team in the BCS, finishing 22nd in the final standings and getting into the mix only by upsetting Virginia Tech on Saturday for the Atlantic Coast Conference title.

Still, game officials said they're thrilled to have a Bowden-Paterno matchup.

"We are extremely proud to have two of the best here. ... Two marquee coaches in the game, one and two respectively," Orange Bowl CEO Keith Tribble said.

Bowden has 359 wins, six more than Paterno — and both steered their teams to surprising comeback stories in 2005.

Bowden's Florida State team snapped a three-game losing streak on Saturday when it beat then No. 5-Virginia Tech for the ACC crown — the Seminoles' 12th in 14 seasons. Florida State's reward turned out to be a matchup with another highly touted opponent, a Penn State team that nearly went unbeaten.

"I feel very fortunate for us," said Bowden, whose team fell from the national rankings after losing three straight. "I feel very happy for our boys and our assistant coaches that we were able to do it. Naturally I feel very lucky about it and sometimes I can't hardly believe it."

Amid whispers that their longtime coach is too old to compete, Paterno's Nittany Lions had lost 17 of their last 24 games entering this season and



Florida Seminoles' coach Bobby Bowden and PSU Lions' coach Joe Paterno look forward to a well played showdown at this year's Orange Bowl.

haven't won a bowl game since the 1999 season. But only a last-second touchdown by Michigan kept Penn State from finishing



to national prominence, and can relate to the criticism that Paterno has endured in recent seasons.

"We've caught a lot of heck this year. I've caught a lot of heck," Bowden said. "I can look at Joe's program and say, 'Look there. Just be patient. Look what'll happen.' ... It just substantiates my feeling that nobody's going to win forever. You can have a bad year. You can have a bad cycle, but that's not the end because you can come back."

Bowden is 1-6 all-time against Paterno; he lost all six meetings as West Virginia's coach in the early 1970s, and guided Florida State to a 24-17 victory over Penn State in the 1990 Blockbuster Bowl — also at Miami.

It's probably no surprise that both coaches have sparkling records in bowl games. Bowden is 19-8-1 all-time in bowls, a winning percentage of .696 that is the best in Division I-A history. Paterno is 20-10-1 in bowl games, plus is the only coach to ever win the Rose, Sugar, Fiesta, Orange and Cotton bowls.

"Florida State's one heck of a tradition, one heck of a coaching staff," Paterno said. "Bobby Bowden is a great coach. They're going to bring a lot of people. We're going to be playing down in Florida, which is almost like an away game and a home game for Florida State. You know, we've got our hands full."

this regular season with a perfect record.

Bowden says he couldn't be happier that his longtime friend has the Nittany Lions back

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Breaking the Heisman Curse

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Who the hell is Danny Wuerffel? Is Ron Dayne still alive? Is Gino Torretta a player or a Mexican dish? Maybe you know who these players are, and maybe you don't. At one point in time they were the best at what they did, and that was football. They are all also winners of the Heisman Trophy. The Heisman Trophy is an honor awarded to the most outstanding college football player every year. Each season these individuals leave us in awe of with their amazing abilities, and star studded stats. But what is incredibly misleading is the expectation for these players to prevail as professionals in their careers.

In the last ten years the award was presented, there have only been four (that's counting Ricky Williams) successful Heisman Trophy winners. And by success, I mean they have had decent NFL careers. Of course, they can

be successful peewee football coaches or lawn chair salesmen, but that has nothing to do with the Heisman Trophy. And of these four players only three still play (still counting Williams). So what is the deal? Why are there so many Heisman busts? The answer lies in the description of the award.

The Heisman Trophy is awarded to the most outstanding

college football player every year. Being the most outstanding and being the best are two different things when it comes to college football. Sure Ron Dayne was the most outstanding player in



Photo courtesy of Google Images

The Heisman may not always be awarded to an NFL ready player.

1999, he rushed for 1,834 yards, with a 6.1 average. He scored 19 rushing touchdowns, and broke the all-time college rushing mark set by Ricky Williams, with 6,925 yards. But it was the player

great intelligence and physical ability. Often these Heisman winners have the physical tools but lack the intelligence to play at a higher level. It is also possible that these players are a "product

who finished seventh in the voting that year that had the greatest impact in the NFL, Alabama running back, Shaun Alexander.

What spells success in college football does not always hold true in the NFL. Which is why often times quarterbacks who post huge numbers in college often times fail in the NFL. To play in the NFL takes

of the system," meaning they only succeed when placed into the correct type of offense. Danny Wuerffel threw for thousands of touchdowns at the University of Florida. He flourished under Steve Spurrier's "Fun and Gun" pass happy system at Florida. After being selected to the New Orleans Saints in 1997, he never played good football again.

So does this year hold another huge Heisman bust? This year's front-runners include USC tailback Reggie Bush, Texas quarterback Vince Young, and USC quarterback Matt Leinart. Both Young and Leinart have the physical abilities to play the quarterback position in the NFL. It is only a matter if they can adapt and grasp the intricacies of NFL play. As for Reggie Bush, well let's just say he maybe the best college running back in the last ten years, think the next coming of Marshall Faulk. All of this predicting is such an inexact science, so I guess only time will tell.

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After the Nittany Lions' spectacular season and near spotless 10-1 record there are two things I know for sure. First, Penn State will be attending a major BCS bowl game. Second, thousands of Penn State fans will follow. The Penn State Alumni Association has had information about available bowl packages posted on their website for some time now. The interest in the bowl packages has been unprecedented. To date, there have been over 7,000 requests for information on the bowl packages. I wonder how many of those requests come from Commonwealth campuses like our very own Penn State Harrisburg. I am afraid it is not nearly enough.

If there is one thing that really bothers me at Penn State Harrisburg it's the lack of support for Penn State. It is disgusting the lack of pride people have in their own college. I realize we are not in Happy Valley but we are still a very big part of the Penn State family. Don't tell me that we are not really Penn State. Penn State has 19 Commonwealth campuses that comprise approximately 37% of Penn State's total enrollment. The football team still represents us every time they take the field.

I walk down the halls of Penn State Harrisburg and the shirts people have on are offensive. I've seen people sporting USC shirts, I've seen people in Florida State shirts walking down the halls, and worst of all, I've seen people wearing incredibly repulsive Michigan shirts on our campus. I've even had to endure ignorant Notre Dame fans.

I am tired of defending my college to my classmates. How can you attend one college and support another, much less one of its rivals? It seems ridiculous to consider buying stock in one company and then buying the products of one of its competitors. That is exactly what you are doing when you attend Penn State but support another college team. You are buying your education at Penn State. Your diploma will say Penn State. It is ludicrous to then turn around and support another college.

The football team is playing for you. They support you every time they take the field. You don't have to go to the bowl game or attend all the games, just support your team when they play for you. The university stands to make millions of dollars because of the great success of the football team. These are millions of dollars that will go into the university, essentially to you. If you don't like the football team, that's fine, the rest of us will keep our money, but get out of our college. So as the bowl season approaches give the Nittany Lions what they deserve; support and respect. Say it with me now, "We Are . . . PENN STATE!!"