

# Those Cotton pickin' Nittany Lions

By RICK STARR  
Sports Editor



Penn State will play either Texas A&M, Texas or Baylor in the Cotton Bowl New Year's day it was learned yesterday. The official announcement will come Nov. 16 after the Penn State-Ole Miss game at Beaver Stadium, but yesterday morning it was revealed by a team spokesman that the Penn State players have already agreed to accept the anticipated Cotton Bowl bid and battle the Southwest Conference Champion. Nothing is official until Nov. 16, but, like last year, word of the pairings came out early. Most significant as far as Penn State is concerned is the information Associated Press has learned. According to AP, Penn State "has been assured it (Cotton Bowl bid) will be forthcoming Nov. 16 after the Lions play Ohio University." In addition, Associated Press yesterday reported Notre Dame and Alabama will meet in the Orange Bowl New Year's

day, and Florida and Nebraska will square off in the Sugar Bowl New Year's Eve. The Florida-Nebraska matchup came about after Florida knocked off Auburn last weekend. The Orange Bowl is a ditto of last year's Sugar Bowl, which ND won 24-23.

Also, the Tulsa Tribune has discovered from close sources that Oklahoma State and Pitt will clash in this year's Sun Bowl at El Paso, Texas.

According to Penn State offensive tackle Jeff Bleamer, before practice on Monday Lion coach Joe Paterno explained to the team the various options available, focusing on the fact that only in Dallas could Penn State play a higher ranked opponent (Texas A&M is currently 5th).

"Paterno told us there were feelers from all the bowls," Bleamer said. "He gave us a rundown on the bowls and said how interesting each would be. Everyone wanted to go to the Cotton. It was unanimous and no one objected to it."

However, Penn State Athletic Director Ed Czekaj last night said Penn State was only given one offer. Penn State accepted, Czekaj said, rather than wait and risk getting shut out.

"We got one telephone call — no more," Czekaj explained. "It was a feeler from the Cotton Bowl and it came after the Maryland game. We told Joe what had happened, that we got a

feeler, and I asked Joe what he thought about it. He then talked to his staff and they talked to the kids.

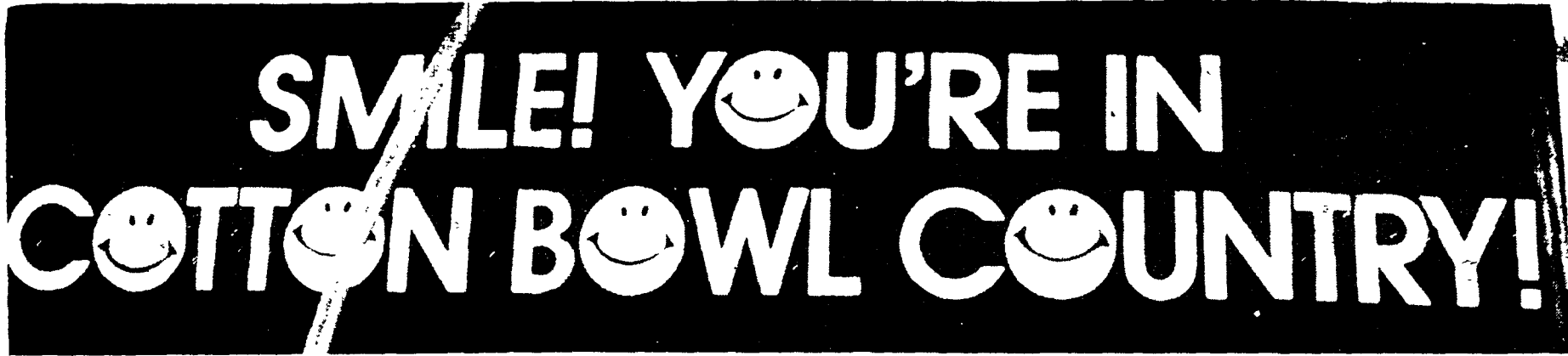
"There were several reasons," Czekaj continued. "If you sit and wait for the other ones they might not call and you could get shut out. Or you would get a minor bowl instead. There are ifs, ands and buts."

By picking up the Cotton Bowl, Penn State is not assuring itself of lining up a top-ranked opponent. Texas A&M is currently ranked higher, but Texas is 12th and Baylor isn't even on the chart. Both Texas and Baylor still have a shot at the Southwest crown, and therefore could end up opposite Penn State New Year's day.

Penn State played in the 1972 Cotton Bowl in which it upset Texas by a convincing 30-6 margin. That game was important to Penn State's national image as Tennessee defeated Penn State in the last game of the season that year 31-11 on national TV.

It was equally important for Eastern football. Paterno said of that game, "It was awfully important to us to beat Texas in the (1972) Cotton Bowl. I felt at the time we were trying to show people that what we had done in previous years was not a fluke. There was so much that had been done that was ready to go down the drain if Texas had beaten us. We were in a part of the country where we had to show people we were a pretty good football team."

Three years later the situation is different. Penn State no longer has to stand up for the East. This year it is for personal reasons of prestige and money that Penn State will travel deep in the heart of Texas.



"Where the hell is Penn State going this year?" You've probably heard that question more than once these past weeks, at least once a day since last Saturday when Penn State defeated Maryland.

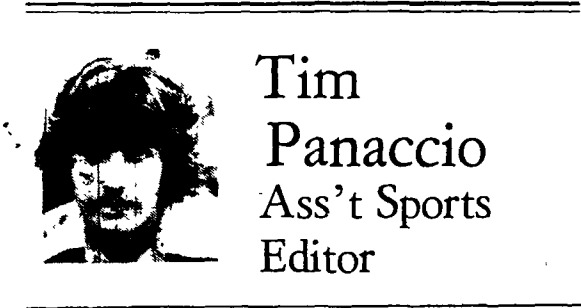
Yesterday morning, the old crony himself, Ralph Bernstein of the Associated Press assured readers throughout the state of Pennsylvania that Penn State would be going to the Cotton Bowl (Dallas) to meet the champion of the Southwest Conference.

At the moment, that champion would appear to be number five ranked Texas A&M.

The biggest thing that has people talking is that Lion coach Joe Paterno and his players have decided by mutual agreement to accept a Cotton Bowl bid if such a bid is offered.

Ed McNamara, the Orange Bowl scout who attended the Maryland game, would not disclose how interested their people were in Penn State. However he did say, "We are very much interested in Alabama and what they do from here on."

As was learned yesterday, Alabama and Notre Dame appear headed for the Orange Bowl. Notre Dame has been offered \$600,000 to go there, according to the New York Times.



Tim Panaccio  
Ass't Sports Editor

It was also learned yesterday that other bowls have their pre-pre selections already in mind.

Which brings us to Penn State. How reliable is this Cotton Bowl jazz? It must be very reliable. Paterno was unavailable to reach last night for comment.

Since he and the team already decided to go to the Cotton Bowl if a bid were offered then it is obvious there was a gentlemen's agreement. Otherwise, the team and Paterno would not have said it would go here or there and

thus close off all other possible bowl bids. Which means an agreement has been made.

Consider what Penn State gains by going to the Cotton Bowl. From a school standpoint, it has a chance to be higher ranked than if it played Notre Dame-say in the Orange Bowl. From the pleasure standpoint, the players might not enjoy Dallas as much as Miami.

"Personally," says Jim Rosecrans, "I'd like to go to the Orange Bowl. I had a good time in Miami. Of course, lots of guys said they liked Dallas more than New Orleans."

Tom Donchez is the only Penn State player to have ever gone to the Cotton Bowl (1972). Apparently, he had some say in the matter Monday night.

"Joe said that Tom had some fun there," says Rosecrans.

"Since Donchez was already there," explains Jeff Bleamer, "the guys asked him in general how it was. He said he liked it a lot better and so did the coaches. They all said they liked it better than the Orange Bowl."

The game is the primary consideration. But pleasure is the next one.

"You think about whether or not you'll have a good time," says Bleamer. "You gotta be there for nine days so there better be something to do."

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