

College football Saturday better than pro football Sunday

By Jared Shanker

FOOTBALL fans across the country are salivating at the mouth like a Pavlov puppy in anticipation of Thursday's season opener.

Drew Brees. Brett Favre (he did come back, right?). Vikings. Saints. Thursday, Sept. 9 marks the end of an eight-month long drought of professional football.

Bah, I say. They're talking about the wrong Thursday opener. Who cares about a rematch of last season's epic NFC title game?

OK, maybe I do a little, but not nearly as much as I care about this Thursday's Presbyterian-Wake Forest game — college football's season opener.

No, it isn't as sexy as the NFL's kickoff contest, but my excitement for the NFL pales in comparison to my excitement for the start of the college football season.

Why? It's simple really. College football is better than professional football.

Given enough time (and space), I could give 50 reasons, but for the condition of our readers' eyes, I'll limit it to just 10 reasons.

1. Rivalries. Is there anything more exciting than a rivalry game, especially when it decides which teams will play for the national championship? Only in college football can a team go 5-7 but still consider it a successful season if it can knock off its rival. Need proof how much rivalries mean to players and fans? The Penn State and Pitt on-field rivalry has been dormant for nearly 10 years, but the trash talking and off-field battles between fans has yet to cease. The best part: No rematches. College teams meet once every 52 weeks, unlike NFC West "rivals" the Cardinals and Seahawks, who play twice in a three-week span this year.

2. Student sections. Home of the most creative people in the country. There is nothing quite like sitting in a student section instead of the 100 level of an unhomey NFL stadium, filled with mostly three-piece suits instead of jerseys. I'm not a Rutgers fan by any means, but I have never been part of a more incredible atmosphere than

standing in the student section for its historic upset of No. 3 Louisville in 2006.

3. Iconic coaches. There might not be a more famous coach than Vince Lombardi, but, outside of him, there aren't many nationally known iconic NFL coaches. College football has legends such as Joe Paterno, Bobby Bowden, Paul "Bear" Bryant, Knute Rockne and the list keeps going.

4. Fan passion. Fans don't often refer to themselves as Dallas Cowboys fans during introductions, but you can bet there are a few who are quick to show their Texas Longhorn pride. Alma maters are an immediate conversation starter, because nobody considers themselves a Cowboy, but plenty consider themselves Longhorns, Nittany Lions or Trojans.

5. Offenses. The NFL prides itself on parity, and it couldn't be more evident than watching let-us-put-you-to-sleep NFL offenses. The Patriots' spread offense in 2007 blew more NFL minds than Einstein's theory of relativity. On any given Saturday, you can see the triple option, spread offense, I-formation, Wing-T or West Coast and don't be surprised to see the

next innovative offense this fall.

6. Bowl games. Maybe college football doesn't have a true national championship, but there is no better time to be a football fan than during bowl season. Between Dec. 21 and Jan. 10, there are only three days during that span without a bowl game. Awesome!

7. BCS. Sorry, but I'm not convinced a playoff is the right thing for college football, especially if it exceeds four teams. The BCS makes the entire regular season a playoff, and a 16-team playoff would absolutely ruin it. Change the system and those great end-of-the-season rivalries become meaningless. Instead of going for undefeated seasons, elite players will sit out. Don't think that's all that bad? Watch last year's Colts-Jets regular-season game after Manning left and try not to staple your eyes shut.

8. Headlines. In the NFL, open the newspaper and the headlines are on Darrelle Revis holding out, Albert Haynesworth being worthless and Shaun Rogers carrying a gun on a plane. College football has headlines that matter: When will JoePa retire, can Alabama repeat and how three elite programs — Florida, Oklahoma and

Texas — are undergoing major changes at quarterback.

9. Tradition. We Are ... Penn State. Dotted the I at Ohio State. Touchdown Jesus. Texas A&M fans kissing their girlfriends after touchdowns ("When the team scores, everybody scores," Maj. Doc Mills, an employee of the university, said in 2001). College football is built on tradition, and each school has at least one.

10. Heisman Trophy. There isn't a more prestigious award in sports than winning the Heisman, given to college football's most outstanding player. Actually, it's more like a club than an award. Win one and you are forever remembered in college football lore. Can anyone even name the last MVP not named Peyton Manning? Everyone remembers Mark Ingram's touching Heisman acceptance speech about his imprisoned father, though.

And now, you will forever remember my little speech when convincing your friends why college football is tops.

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MY OPINION

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By Jacqueline Bigar

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2010:

This year, tension often mounts. Work, professional commitments and community issues seem to fall on your shoulders. Practice asking for help. Your creativity will flourish if you pace yourself. You also might seem fussy to others. Learn to relax. If you are single, you could meet someone through your work. Take your time getting to know this person, especially if work and pleasure are mixed. If you are attached, understand the importance of supporting your sweetie in different areas of his or her life. GEMINI can shake you up.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have:
5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
**** You might make first contact! Stay open to others. If others don't return the favor, it doesn't mean you are doing something wrong. Keep flowing, knowing there is an intrinsic disconnect. Tonight: Join friends for a midweek break.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
*** Your possessive side emerges in your dealings. Self-discipline can go only so far. Sitting on your feelings could backfire and come out in an odd manner. Creativity can fill in some of the gaps, but wild risk-taking could be problematic. Be sure that you can accept the end results. Tonight: Your treat.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
**** Though you might be on cruise control, others are not. How you deal with interference and others' issues is more important than you believe. Be careful about saying one thing but doing another. Try to stay authentic and centered. Tonight: What you want.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
*** You might be overthinking an issue. As a result, molehills become mountains. Try to step back and get outside of yourself. Communication could be out of whack, as people are not connected to their feelings. Give yourself and others space. Tonight: Catch up on a pal's news. Out and about.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
**** Knowing your goals, even just for a day, could help make plans move forward more easily. Prioritize accordingly. You will avoid getting waylaid by details and people. Confusion could happen when trying to handle a financial matter. Do you think you have all the facts? Tonight: With friends.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
**** Pressure builds, making you wonder what is acceptable and what you need. Sometimes there is a conflict of interest between your personal and professional lives. Consider your image within your immediate circle. How do you want others to think of you? Tonight: Burning the candle at both ends.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
**** If confusion swirls, detach and distance yourself. You will gain a perspective, but not in the middle of this situation. Don't hold yourself back. Worry can become fear and paralyze you. Take a risk; otherwise you have nothing. Tonight: Let your imagination choose.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
**** Work with a key associate or individual. A meeting and phone calls could distract you. Stay focused. Concentrate on what is needed. Another person points to the right path. Tonight: Get together with a favorite person.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
**** Others will keep coming at you unless you establish barriers. Know what you want, and follow through. You are unlikely to see eye to eye with a boss or with someone on a work-related matter. Tonight: Say "yes" to an offer.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
** Emphasize completion and accomplishment in areas that are important to you. Easily, you see a situation differently from others. Be careful with news, as it might not be all facts. Know that there is more forthcoming. Tonight: Squeeze in some exercise.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
*** If you keep hitting a blockage, what do you do? It is critical to keep moving. Know that when you keep hitting a brick wall over and over, it means the path isn't accessible. Be willing to try alternatives. A key person in your life might be nit-picking. Tonight: Let your hair down.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
**** Defer to others. In fact, if others want to lead a project, all the better. You might be happier staying close to home or working from home. You also might want to focus on matters other than work. Tonight: Order in.

BORN TODAY
Singer Gloria Estefan (1957), singer Conway Twitty (1933), heavyweight boxing champ Rocky Marciano (1923) ***

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