

== 2011 EDITION ==  
TOTALLY REVISED AND UPDATED

DEATH  
TO THE

BCS

THE DEFINITIVE CASE AGAINST  
THE BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

DAN WETZEL,  
JOSH PETER, AND JEFF PASSAN

"The most thoroughly researched, reasoned, and readable argument to date for college football reform."—*Time*



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**PRAISE FOR**  
*Death to the BCS*

“The most thoroughly researched, reasoned, and readable argument to date for college football reform.”  
—*Time*

“The plan put forward by Wetzels, Peter, and Passan is certainly the strongest BCS-alternative to date. It is imperative that other sports journalists, college administrators, and football fans read *Death to the BCS*.”  
—Brian Frederick, *The Huffington Post*

“Alternately brilliant and scary. You will put the book down sweaty, angry, and wishing you could do something to change the system.”  
—Nando DiFino, *The Wall Street Journal*

“Required reading for college football fans.”  
—Tony “Mr. College Football” Barnhart,  
*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“What the book lacks in subtlety it makes up for in ferocity, attacking the BCS from the opening page and never letting up on the theme that the college football bowl system is a terrible way to crown a champion of a great sport.”  
—Pat Forde, ESPN.com

“A love letter to logic, meticulously reported and written with the kind of clarity you suspect a preacher aspires to when trolling for possible converts.”  
—Mike Vaccaro, *New York Post*

“This here is a rant, a metal chair to the head, a no-holds barred, no-mercy, none-dare-call-it-treason tirade. . . . It certainly makes the book a lot of fun to read and as irresistible as a caged match.”  
—Joe Posnanski, SI.com

“I did not fully appreciate the folly of the BCS until I read *Death to the BCS*. There is damning material here.”

—Michael Rosenberg, *Detroit Free Press*

“You might say the only positive thing the BCS has created in its history is this book.”

—Matt James, *The Fresno Bee*

“As scornful as its title.”

—Steve Wieberg and Jack Carey, *USA Today*

“The authors offer a compelling alternative plan.”

—Matthew Ott, *Associated Press*

“The buzz of college football. The new book takes out the Bowl Championship Series at the knees.”

—Dennis Dodd, *CBS Sports*

“It does grave damage to all the myths the BCS pushers spread like fertilizer, using a blend of facts, figures, interviews, anecdotes, and alternatives that confirm everything you ever presumed was wrong with college football’s postseason. It gives hope that common sense will finally reign.”

—Scott Michaux, *Augusta Chronicle*

“The playoff they’ve developed, a 16-team extravaganza that features home games for the top seeds until the national final in some warm weather site, makes practical and financial sense. Death to the BCS! Where’s my pitchfork?”

—Bob Kravitz, *The Indianapolis Star*

“From missed class time to how it would impact the regular season, the book takes every argument made against a playoff and blows it up with the force of a bazooka. Reading *Death to the BCS* was especially poignant for me.”

—Dan Wolken, *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis)

"If you care about college football, regardless of how you feel about the BCS, the book is worth your time. It's informative, provocative, entertaining, and unapologetic—by far the most complete argument against the BCS." —Sam Mellinger, *The Kansas City Star*

"The book accurately and diligently points out what people have known for years: The BCS is fundamentally flawed, at times a joke, and very controversial." —Chris Dufresne, *Los Angeles Times*

"Chances are, come January, the BCS will be a hot topic and anyone with an opinion will have better read this book." —Michael Coffey, *Publishers Weekly*

"The book is so chilling in its exposure of the unseemly side of the bowl racket, that you will feel compelled to shower each week after perusing the BCS standings. It's that infuriating." —Sean Pendergast, *Houston Press*

"Rejoice, all ye college football playoff supporters. You have a voice." —Tom Shatel, *Omaha World-Herald*

"The book details how the corrupt bowl system is a boon for athletic directors, conference commissioners, and bowl executives—but a money loser for just about everyone else, including athletic departments." —Brian Murphy, *Idaho Statesman*

"A compelling argument carefully and painstakingly laid out." —Dan Hinxman, *Reno Gazette-Journal*

"This book makes an awfully, awfully strong case." —Sean Keeler, *The Des Moines Register*

"The book likely will convert even the most ardent playoff opponent." —Paul Costanzo, *The Times Herald*

“If you are a fan of college football, this is a must-read—even if you like the bowl system. No, make that especially if you like the bowl system.”

—Jerry Palm, CBS Sports

“Not only does it expose a lot of the hypocrisy in the cash-driven BCS hierarchy, it gets into how flawed math and corruption determine what teams go to the national title game.”

—Tom Hoffarth, *Los Angeles Daily News*

“An attack on the BCS that will make the power six conference commissioners cringe and enrage college football fans across the country.”

—R.J. Young, *The Oklahoma Daily*

“In great detail, it debunks every myth set forth in defense of the bowl system, exposes a plethora of hypocrisies and offers a saner, more practicable, and more profitable alternative.”

—Michael Arace, *The Columbus Dispatch*

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*To John Junker, for proving our first edition correct*

# PROLOGUE

About five months after the October 2010 release of the first edition of this book came another tome that perfectly illustrated why college football is stuck with the Bowl Championship Series. A retired Arizona Supreme Court justice, two former FBI agents, and a host of others put together the “Final Report” of the Fiesta Bowl’s internal investigation into its corrupt spending habits. Despite dealing with just a single bowl game, it ran nearly one hundred pages longer than *Death to the BCS*.

Nothing validated our book so much as that report, which pulled the veil off Fiesta Bowl CEO John Junker’s payola scheme that lavished his cronies with cash and graft and golf. After reading the report and stumbling upon revelation after revelation, each more stunning than the last, it became obvious to us: We needed to rewrite this book.

So two extra chapters and 15,000 new words later, here is *Death to the BCS: Totally Revised and Updated*, which not only gives a blow-by-blow inside the Fiesta Bowl scandal but chronicles the 2010 season, offers what-should-have-been playoff brackets for the last five years, and tries to answer so many of the questions we received from around the country.

Questions from people like from Steve Johnson in Wisconsin, who wrote: “What can the average fan do?” And Connie Long in Pennsylvania: “Where do I begin with my letter-writing cam-

paign to overturn the BCS?" And Kevin Mallory in Florida: "I would like to help spread the word."

It's simple: Tell a friend. Explain just one thing. Maybe it's the exorbitant salaries for bowl game CEOs. Or how universities can lose millions of dollars attending games with the highest payouts. Perhaps it's that players actually want a playoff. Could be the silly polls and mathematically bankrupt computer systems. The easiest thing would be to talk about the Fiesta Bowl and how it stands for everything college football shouldn't.

Over the past year, we found a nation of college football players, coaches, fans, and, yes, many, many administrators who sought the same thing: the truth. The response, not just in the issuing of multiple printings of the original book or endless media appearances, was amazing.

The media changed the way they covered bowl games and began asking more pointed questions of decision makers. Athletic directors called thanking us, acknowledging they hadn't fully understood the entire system. Many swore change was coming, especially when a new generation of leadership assumes control.

University presidents digested information their conference commissioners wouldn't dare tell them. A governor's annual Christmas reading list included *Death to the BCS*. The book inspired Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA champion Dallas Mavericks, to form a company in hopes of staging his own college football playoff.

More important, we heard from people across the country. One man made a music video. Another named Bob Watson in California said he was boycotting all products from Frito-Lay, the title sponsor of the Fiesta Bowl. "This is not easy," he wrote. "I love Fritos and Cheetos."

After the Fiesta Bowl report, Junker was fired. All the peo-

ple who took his gifts are still around. The only thing they have to fear is the public knowing the truth about the system they continue to defend. It keeps coming and coming and coming.

Here's our latest shot at exposing it.

DAN WETZEL, JOSH PETER, AND JEFF PASSAN  
JUNE 2011

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TO THE  
BCS**

# CONTENTS

Prologue	xiii
Introduction: The Cartel	1
<b>1</b> The Plan	11
<b>2</b> What Could Have Been	18
<b>3</b> Obstruction of Justice	23
<b>4</b> Lies, Damn Lies, and Bowl Payouts	33
<b>5</b> A Fiesta for All	49
<b>6</b> High-Paid Blazers	61
<b>7</b> Presidential Problem	71
<b>8</b> Myth of the Dead Bowls	85
<b>9</b> It's Always Some Team Getting Screwed	96

<b>10</b>	Cowardice and Cupcakes	105
<b>11</b>	Diluting the Regular Season	117
<b>12</b>	Nonsense Math	127
<b>13</b>	Fooling the Voters (Who Are Often Fools)	137
<b>14</b>	The Players' Choice	151
<b>15</b>	The Superfan	162
<b>16</b>	All in a <i>GameDay's</i> Work	171
<b>17</b>	Blue Turf vs. Blue Blood	181
<b>18</b>	The Civil War	191
<b>19</b>	Implicit Trust, Explicit Motivations	201
<b>20</b>	Death to the BCS	213
	Acknowledgments	227
	Index	231

# INTRODUCTION

## The Cartel

For three years, we pored over thousands of pages of tax filings, university contracts, and congressional testimony. We crisscrossed the country interviewing the pertinent power players in college football, on and off the record. We filed scores of Freedom of Information requests. We wanted to answer one question: Why is college football *really* saddled with the brain-dead Bowl Championship Series? We sought the truth, because tens of millions of fans deserve it.

We discovered an ocean of corruption: sophisticated scams, mind-numbing waste, naked political deals, and systemic spin-doctoring from the suits in charge and their well-paid public relations people to hide an ugly reality. While the sleaze should be enough to cause the death of the BCS, it's simply emblematic of a long battle best represented by two men. One stands for common sense and the possibilities the great game can offer. The other is about protecting the one-sided system that enriches and empowers the very few who led college football into this morass, even as it runs counter to their teams' competitive interests.

You've heard of the first. His name is Joe Paterno. He's the eighty-four-year-old icon who, after sixty-two seasons coaching at Penn State, the last forty-six as head coach, is as steadfast a proponent of a playoff as ever. He is us. He is you. He is everyone whose gag reflex is triggered at the mere thought of how college football crowns its national champion.



You might not have heard of the other. His name is Jim Delany. He's the sixty-three-year-old commissioner of Penn State's conference, the Big Ten. He is one of the most powerful people in college athletics. His influence far outweighs that of even the NCAA president, because Delany belongs to the group that hijacked college football and refuses to let go.

Paterno may be the king of the sport, but Delany is the ayatollah, speaking the word of God.

And that word is *no*.

No to a playoff. No to an extra championship game following the bowl season. No to any semblance of sanity in America's greatest spectator sport. No to anything but the loathsome, odious, reviled BCS.

For thirteen years, the BCS has decided the national champion at the highest level of college football, Division I-A. Two human polls and one group of computerized rankings combine to determine the two teams that play in the BCS national championship game. Other top-ranked teams go to the BCS-supported Rose Bowl, Sugar Bowl, Orange Bowl, and Fiesta Bowl. Delany helped conceive the BCS amid widespread skepticism. It's been a bigger disaster than anyone could have imagined. Its approval rating among fans polled by *Sports Illustrated* hovers around 10 percent. And yet Delany draws the following conclusion: "It's been incredibly successful."

For him and his cronies, sure. The BCS is a group of similar, private businesses that bands together in search of money and power, harming the public along the way. It gives off a wretched smell—that of a cartel. Just ask the twenty-one economists and antitrust experts who called it that in a 2011 letter to the United States Department of Justice. The DOJ is now exploring whether to take up an antitrust lawsuit against the BCS. Rather than jack up gas prices or cut off the oil supply like