

■ In my opinion

35 states can't be wrong, Irish really need to "just shut up"

The last time Notre Dame won a bowl game, current Irish quarterback Brady Quinn was only 10 years old.

Since then, the Irish are a dismal 0-7 in postseason play.

Hypothetically, if a person was introduced to college football, or simply born, in the mid-to-late '90s with no access to past records, he or she would believe that Notre Dame is an average at-best football team, considering its less-than-stellar recent performances.

It's too bad most BCS officials are older than 10. It's also unfortunate so many are enamored with Notre Dame's distinguished tradition and loyal fan base. But the most disgusting aspect about the Irish is their "special" requirements. See, noted specifically on the BCS's web page, Notre Dame needs to rank sixth in the final BCS rankings and have nine wins to automatically receive one of two at-large bids into a BCS game — exactly what happened this year, resulting in a Fiesta Bowl bid for the 9-2 Irish.

Take nothing away from Notre Dame — the Irish had a decent season. I say decent because they defeated only three teams (Michigan, BYU and Navy) with winning records and lost to a 5-6 Michigan State team at home.



LUKE ANDREWS
EXCESSIVE CELEBRATION

Fortunately for the Irish, they can rest on their laurels to get them back into the BCS — a place they clearly don't deserve to be. But with 11 consensus national championships (last one was 17 years ago), seven Heisman Trophy winners (last one was 18 years ago), and an alumni list that includes Knute Rockne, Lou Holtz and the Four Horsemen, it becomes obvious that the Irish have experienced more success than any other college football program in the nation — and keeping that past tradition alive is benefiting the Irish, as they are one of the BCS's most coveted teams.

Now, with the Irish traveling to the Fiesta Bowl, I guess most will get what they want come the end of bowl season: The Irish will pocket \$14.8 million, BCS officials will have higher-than-average ratings, and another

team (Ohio State) will hang a leprechaun on its mantle of mediocre wins as Oregon State did after the 2001 Fiesta Bowl, routing the Golden Domers 41-9. How out of place have the Irish been in their last three bowl trips? Well, they've been outscored 107-36. Ouch. Tradition only gets you so far I suppose.

But, until the Irish actually play on Jan. 2, Notre Dame fans probably should hush up and lay low. In a recent poll on ESPN.com of whose fans, Oregon's and Notre Dame's, should "just shut up" regarding the inevitable BCS controversy this season, 35 states polled thought Notre Dame fans should shut up more than Oregon fans. That's because the Irish's biggest argument for leapfrogging a team like the Ducks is based solely on tradition and past laurels, factors that should have nothing to do with bowl game selections.

So, for now, Irish fans, just be thankful you root for the historically-but-not-recently most successful team in college football. And personally, having specific BCS requirements that benefit my team, would hurt my pride.

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Oregon hopes to end recent postseason losing streak

Since Joey Harrington led them to a Fiesta Bowl victory four years ago, the Ducks have not won a bowl game

BY LUKE ANDREWS
SPORTS REPORTER

There have been many significant bowl game memories for Duck fans in the past. From Joey Harrington's fingertip catch for a score against Texas in the 2000 Holiday Bowl to Maurice Morris' improbable 49-yard touchdown run against Colorado in the 2002 Fiesta Bowl, Oregon has often had a flair for the dramatic during bowl season.

This year, however, the Ducks will attempt to reverse a two-game postseason losing streak when they travel to San Diego to take on Oklahoma in the Holiday Bowl.

In their last trip to a bowl game — the 2003 Sun Bowl against Minnesota — the Ducks led 30-28 late in the game before the Golden Gophers' Rhys Lloyd connected on a 42-yard field goal with 23 seconds remaining. The game marked the arrival of then-sophomore quarterback Kellen Clemens, who passed for 363 yards and two touchdowns.

It was the second time in four years the Ducks and Gophers had met in El Paso, Texas, for the Sun Bowl. The first meeting was in 1999, when Harrington connected with Keenan Howry with 1:32 remaining to give the Ducks a 24-20 lead and eventual victory. The 1999 win against Minnesota started a three-game bowl win streak for Oregon that included its two biggest wins to date.

In 2000, the Ducks met high-powered Texas in the Holiday Bowl and capped off the first 10-win season in school history with a thrilling 35-30 victory. Harrington became only the third player in Holiday Bowl history to run, pass and catch a touchdown in the same game.

A year later, the No. 2 Ducks pounded No. 3 Colorado in the Fiesta Bowl. Oregon's defense held the

vaunted Colorado running game to a combined 49 yards. Harrington capped off his career with his third straight bowl game victory, passing for 350 yards and four touchdowns.

However, that was the last time an Oregon team won a bowl game. In the 2002 Seattle Bowl, the Ducks continued their second-half downward spiral with a 38-17 loss to Wake Forest. After winning its first six games of the season, Oregon dropped six of

its last seven that season, including the now-defunct Seattle Bowl.

This year will mark Oregon's 19th overall bowl appearance. The Ducks have a 7-11 all-time bowl record. The longest bowl win streak for Oregon is three games and the longest losing streak is four — a streak that has happened twice.

"We're not a team or a program that is just happy getting to a bowl," Oregon coach Mike Bellotti said. "We want to win that bowl. We feel that's part of our responsibility in getting to a great bowl game."

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