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DUCKS ILLUSTRATED

BCS... Nakaducky Style

Two-Thirds of BCS is BS

Should USC be in the Sugar Bowl this year? Or did the BCS boys get it right in picking LSU and Oklahoma to play for the national championship? But what about Miami of Ohio, Boise State and Texas Christian? They each have only one loss this year, so why aren't they in the mix? Everybody has an opinion, but who's right?

Mike Tranchese, commissioner of the Big East Conference and chairman of the Bowl Championship Series committee, thinks he's right, but finds himself backpedaling again this year, trying to defend the BCS procedures.

The 65 sportswriters who vote in the Associated Press poll think they're right. They think that their number one pick, USC, should be playing LSU. *(Eight of these writers voted the Sooners #1.)*

The 63 college coaches who vote in the USA Today/ESPN poll think they're right. They agree with the

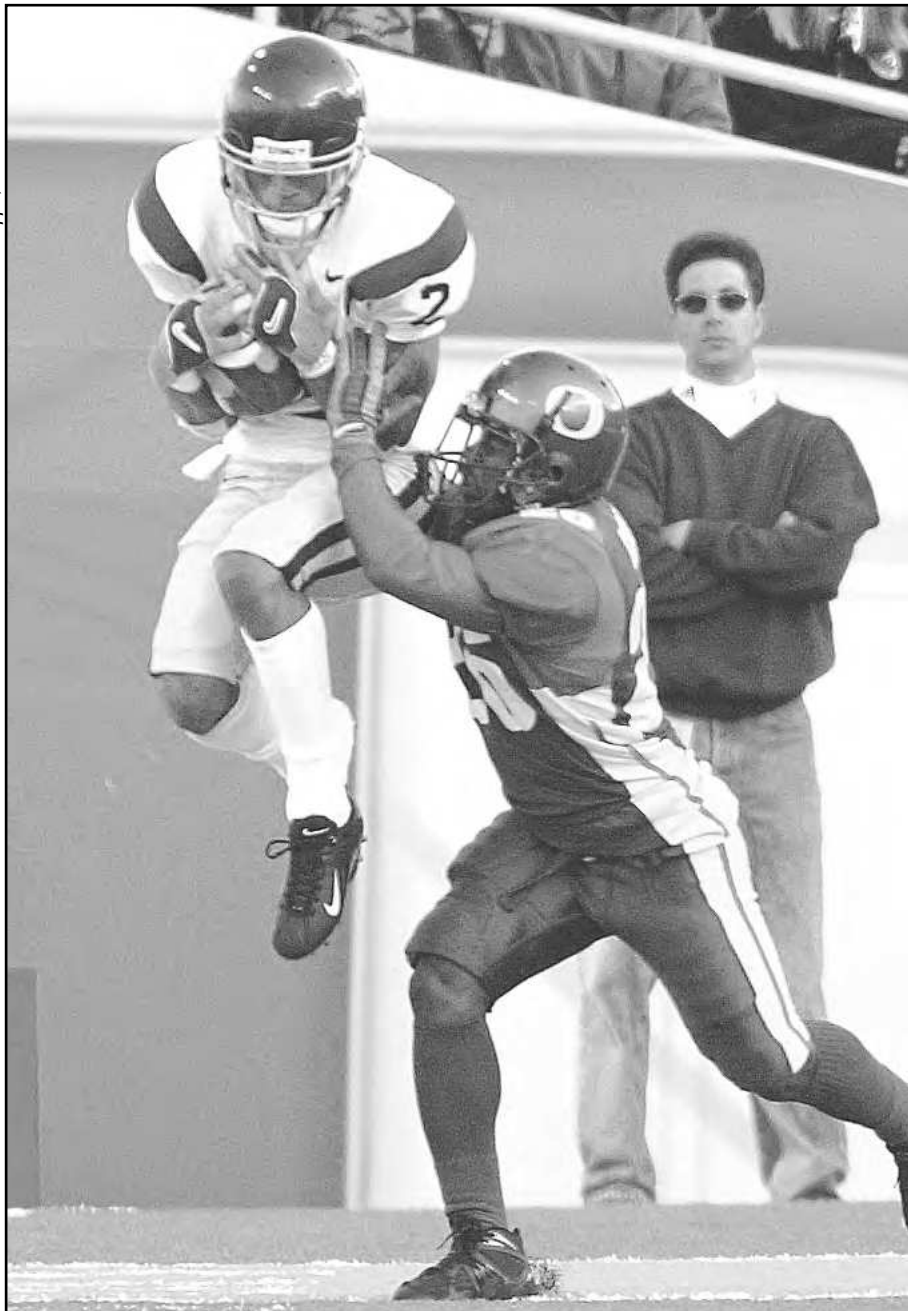
sportswriters. *(Two of the coaches made Oklahoma their top pick.)*

And, of course every TV, radio and sports bar analyst has an opinion. So, what's the answer?

HISTORY Back in the good, old days when a handful of teams played in the Rose Bowl, Sugar Bowl, Orange Bowl and Cotton Bowl and the AP punched out its final poll, crowning the national champion was easy, as long as only one team finished undefeated. But when two or more teams finished undefeated or tied with one loss, all hell would break loose. It must be part of the culture, but Americans have an insane desire to really find out who's #1. So, the coaches' poll was created, since some people think these men might know more about football than journalists. But when the two polls disagreed, controversy still raged. Add in athletic departments looking for more money, corporate sponsorship of more and more bowl games, and the situation was ripe for the creation of the BCS in 1998.

Of course, certain individuals in positions of power made sure

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USC would be playing for the National Championship under Nakadate's better BCS system.

that most of the money got funneled their way. The SEC, Big 12, ACC and Big East conferences came up with the idea and begrudgingly included the Pac-10, Big Ten and Notre Dame to try and lend an air of credibility to the proceedings. At face value the BCS is a blatant attempt to keep all of the big money away from the 54 non-BCS schools. The BCS formula is supposed to be fair, logical and objective. As far as most people can tell, it is none of these. What's the matter with it?

THE POLLS are the starting point of the formula. But they are wholly subjective. Although the sportswriters and coaches are supposed to know all 117 Division I-A teams, they cannot possibly watch all the games every week, no matter what time zone they're in; and they don't have the time and means to evaluate all the teams objectively. What's the probability, for instance, that ACC coaches and beat writers vote for teams in their region without even seeing other teams play? And, of course, it's worth remembering the political saying, "The voters don't decide the election. The people who count the ballots do." (An undesirable side effect of using the polls in the formula is that coaches are encouraged to run up the score whenever they can in order to influence

the voters.)

THE COMPUTERS are the most controversial part of the BCS formula. The most vehement critics are probably people who are mathematically challenged, barely passed high school algebra, and have been victimized by their own computers with regularity, but they have a point.

The computer rankings are supposed to be the objective part of the BCS formula. However, remember that each of the seven chosen rankings is the result of somebody feeding data into a formula that he devised. What criteria do these programmers use? Why did the BCS committee choose these programmers? Are they compensated for their offerings each week? Why do we need seven? If you think about it, if a valid set of criteria were determined, then the BCS would need only one ranking system. The fact that the calculations happen behind closed doors makes people think cyborgs are in charge, or worse, that somebody is changing the results at the last minute.

THE REST of the elements of the BCS formula are schedule rank, number of losses and the quality win component. Inclusion of these is truly bogus, mainly because they are redundant. If the seven computer rating systems are valid, they would already take these things



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