

Playoff Qualifiers

Both the NFL and college football have a playoff with pre-determined qualification rules. Amazingly, there are never any quarrels over NFL playoff selection. There are always disputes in college football.

The primary reason is that the FBS college playoff is so small - just two teams. Another reason is that relatively speaking, NFL teams face equally difficult schedules. Thus easily understood selection schemes based on automatic qualifiers and win-loss records are sufficiently equitable.

In college football, there are vast differences in schedule strength, so a metric more sophisticated than record is necessary to rank teams. Enter the human polls and computer ratings. Subjectively biased or incomprehensible to the layman, respectively, these rankings will always be scritinized. The media will invariably find fault with whatever decision the BCS composite reaches.

Consider how irrational it is to split hairs over virtually indistinguishable 11-1 college football teams, while silently approving of a system in which San Diego (8-8) makes the NFL playoffs over New England (11-5).

A larger playoff field (4 or 8 teams) will relax some of the pressure placed on the BCS to choose the top teams. There will always be disputes over the last team to get in - witness the NCAA basketball tournament. Hopefully, a multi-round college football playoff will not succumb to automatic bids, but will instead choose the n most deserving teams, regardless of the size of n . In an environment of drastically different schedule strengths, objective computer rating systems will always play an important role in completing that thankless task.

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