

# THE HARMELIN MEDIA REPORT

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## College Football Championship by Carrie Wulff

What is the BCS and why does it spark such controversy? The Bowl Championship Series, also known as the BCS, was created in 1998 as a way to isolate the top two college football teams chosen to play in the championship game, as well as eight other teams to play in various bowl games. Only colleges in the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly known as Division 1-A) are included. These are the colleges with big football programs who offer the maximum number of football scholarships allowed by the NCAA. There is a somewhat complicated system of polls and computer models that select the top ten teams. The formula has varied over the years, and the most recent



change seems to be for the best. The new BCS system is broken into three parts: people polls where anyone can cast his vote, the coaches' poll, and the Harris Interactive College Football Poll. The Harris Interactive College Football poll is comprised of former players, coaches, administrators, and current and former sports journalists. This formula decides who will play in the five championship bowls: the Sugar, Orange, Fiesta, Rose, and, the most important of them all — the BCS Championship game.

Players, coaches and especially the fans have been questioning for years this method of determining the final 10 teams. Most believe a true champion should be determined on the field. Every other major sport, whether college or professional, has playoff games to determine the best team. In fact, all the other college football divisions have playoffs to determine the champion. Why has big-time college football always been treated differently?

There are many arguments, pro and con, regarding collegiate playoff games. What better and fairer way to decide a champion than a direct head-to-head competition on the field rather than in an online popularity contest? Without playoff games these teams face a fierce competition throughout the entire season. There is little room for error if they want to make it into the running for the bowl games. Every single game counts between August and December. Aside from determin-

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## Social Media by Heather Foster

Social media seems to be all the rage these days, but many advertisers don't know



what exactly to do with it. Many advertisers ask about banner opportunities on social media sites. However, while banner ads are important, they are only one piece of the puzzle.

By and large, social media should be seen as a "package deal" by advertisers, consisting of a combination of banner and "beyond the banner" opportunities. These opportunities include brand-specific pages, blogs, micro-blogs, and other applications to make a social media package complete.

Banner ads generally have lower click-thru-rates on social media sites than on other properties. So depending on the advertiser's objective, a banner-only campaign in social media may not be enough. When users participate in social media, they are there to engage in their online community, whether it's to get updates from a group that they're a member of, or by micro-blogging about what they're doing right now. Banner ads are a great vehicle for driving traffic to these "beyond the banner" opportunities, perhaps by highlighting an advertiser's application or group.

There are many reasons for an advertiser to opt for a social media package deal. Advertisers can take advantage of the full offerings of social media properties by developing a blog, a page in a social network, or maybe a Twitter account. However, often times, advertisers don't know how to quantify the success of social media

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## Obama's Change and the Media Industry

by Tiffany Kerper

When President-elect Barack Obama campaigned for the presidency, his main focus was "Change." He focused on issues such as the environment, taxes, social security and other things that are important to the average American. When you dig deeper into what Barack Obama stands for, you will see that his "change" campaign also affects the media industry. His change policies will have an impact on media, advertisers and agencies.

In September, before he was elected, then-candidate Obama urged the delay of Arbitron's Portable

People Meters (PPMs). He wrote a letter to Arbitron President Stephen Morris asking that the PPMs be delayed until they are accredited by the Media Research Council, even though the accreditation is voluntary. He was concerned that the meters were undercounting minorities. This was his first step in potentially changing media regulations back to the Democratic views.

President-elect Obama's main "change" is likely going to be reversing the Republican push towards deregulation of ownership and restoring strong government oversight of the media marketplace.

He believes that the FCC media ownership rules should remain and that they are critical to the public interest. Mr. Obama has been quoted to say, "We

should be doing more to encourage diversity in ownership in broadcast media, promote the development of new media outlets and the expression of diverse viewpoints."

For advertisers, this will help to keep media costs down. By not allowing large media conglomerates to acquire the competition, there will continue to be variety and room for negotiation.

In terms of the Internet, Mr. Obama believes it has been such a success because it is the most open network in history. He strongly supports the principle of network neutrality to preserve the benefits of open competition on the Internet.

We live in the most information-abundant age in history. Mr. Obama values our First Amendment freedoms and our rights to artistic expression. In protecting children, he does not feel regulations are the answers. He feels that government should act to protect kids in a non-intrusive way on broadcast radio and TV. Instead, he will give parents the tools and information they need to control what their children see on television and on the Internet that is fully consistent with the First Amendment. He does, however, support tough penalties and increased enforcement of resources and forensic tools for law enforcement, and collaboration between law enforcement and the private sector to identify and prosecute people who abuse the Internet to exploit children.

Just four weeks after President-elect Obama takes office, the biggest technological change in TV history will take place. All full-power broadcast television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog airwaves and begin broadcasting only digital. President-elect Obama is committed to working with the Senate and House commerce committees and the appropriate agencies to ensure that this transition happens without significant disruption and inconvenience. He is particularly concerned about low-income, elderly, disabled, and minority populations and will continue to offer outreach services to help them with the transition.

As Barack Obama takes office on January 20, 2009, keep in mind that "change" doesn't just affect national defense, taxes, social security, the environment and the other well-covered campaign issues, it could also affect the Internet, newspapers, radio, television, and even audience measurement.



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ing a champion based on performance alone, playoffs would bring college football into conformity with other major sports.

If playoffs were implemented there would be even more concern about the academics of the athletes. Playoffs mean an already long season would extend into another semester of school. This would take even more time away from academics for the athletes participating in the playoff games. They are already short on time because of the numerous practices all week and traveling to games on the weekends. There is little time to study during their first semester of the year. The second semester shouldn't start with the same pattern. After all, aren't these athletes in college to learn?



The BCS was created to do one thing – pick the best two teams to compete in a championship game. After all the tweaks made over the years to the supposedly “perfect” polling system, mistakes have still been made. The two teams that play in the championship game have not always been the best of the best. How could an undefeated team not make it to a bowl? This was one of the many questions regarding the accuracy of the BCS in 2004 when Auburn was snubbed from the Orange Bowl. Three teams were undefeated during the 2004 season, but only two played on the field. Fans and coaches ultimately made the decision that Auburn would not play in the Orange Bowl.

If the system that has been put into place to pick the top 10 teams does not prove to be accurate, then why are we using it? The teams who perform the best on the field should be the teams to compete in the championships, just like every other major sport. Even president-elect Barack Obama has expressed his opinion on *60 Minutes* about the need for NCAA football playoffs. He said he would “throw my weight around a little bit” in order to get an eight-team playoff to decide the national champion. Unfortunately there will be no changes until the current BCS contract expires at the end of the 2010 bowl season.



The BCS argues that the system that is in place ensures a continuous atmosphere throughout the entire season. If there were playoff games, the regular season games would become less important. TV ratings would definitely fall throughout the season and attendance of games would most likely also decrease. For example, how many college basketball fans race to their TVs every time a regular season game is on, compared to March Madness? The viewership is not even comparable between the season games and the playoff games. The BCS feels the

same would apply if college football had playoff games. The BCS notes that regular season ratings and attendance are already incredibly high so they are not pushing for playoffs — even though the playoffs followed by a championship between the two best college teams could rival the NFL playoffs and Superbowl.

ESPN recently signed a four-year \$500 million deal with the BCS. This deal will not affect the Rose Bowl until 2010 when their contact with ABC will expire, but may affect the other bowls. The Sugar, Fiesta, Orange, and the BCS Championship game will move from free, broadcast TV to paid cable TV in January 2011. There is some concern with this



move. ESPN is available in 98 million households while FOX broadcasts, where the games are currently televised, can be received by 114 million TV households. What happens to the 16 million households who do not get ESPN? They won't be able to see the sport's biggest bowl games of the year unless they sign up for monthly bills for cable or satellite TV. There is a great chance that the ratings will be affected once the switch has been made due to lack of viewers. The declining TV ratings raise concerns about the current state of the bowls. The BCS Championship game has decreased in ratings and attendance in the last two years. What is the reason for the decreases? Could the economy be the reason for the loss of ticket sales or is it the lackluster match ups? In 2008, the TV ratings of most premiere bowls dropped and nine bowls failed to fill 80% of their stadiums' seating capacity. The TV ratings have been on a constant decline over the past few years. The 2006 championship game aired with a 21.7 Nielsen national household rating, followed by a 17.4 rating in 2007 and then another drop in ratings to a 14.4 in 2008.

What's to become of the NCAA bowl games in if they continue using the BCS system to determine the NCAA football champion?

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efforts. What is the appropriate success metric for such a campaign? The advertiser should determine this before the campaign starts. Also, while other types of online campaigns may give immediate results, a successful social media campaign may take a long time to see the benefits.

What are the benefits of a comprehensive social media campaign? There are many. First of all, online media provides the user with a community where he can be with others that also like the advertiser's brand. As users interact with that community, there is opportunity for advertisers to gain more insight into their brand, as if they were participating in a focus group. It's a great way to answer the question, "what do consumers like, or dislike about us?" Advertisers often learn that they can include additional keyword terms to their SEM (Search Engine Marketing, also known as paid search) or SEO (Search Engine Optimization) campaigns. And speaking of SEO, advertisers are often surprised to learn that a solid social media campaign can enhance their SEO efforts through link building.



One of the best social media campaigns was executed by president-elect Barack Obama. As many saw, Obama was recently named Marketer of the Year by *Advertising Age*. Obama managed to stand out from his political rivals by using social media. His website had a social media arm to it: not only did he build his site, BarackObama.com, but he

built a social media aspect arm of it — my.barackobama.com. It was this extension that enabled users to express themselves on Barack Obama's website. He and his team could see how people felt about him. They took those insights and applied them to Obama's campaign.

Obama also had accounts on several social media properties, ranging from Facebook, where he had well over 150,000 fans, to Twitter, where he had over 137,000 followers. By comparison, John McCain had a mere 2,000 followers on Twitter. Obama's social media efforts were put in place over a year before election day, giving the campaign time to take hold. Of course, Obama used banner ads to direct users to his social media efforts.

Most advertisers can take a page out of Obama's play book. By creating an online community where users can engage with a brand, advertisers can learn from their consumers. Online focus group? Get terms for their SEM campaigns? Improve SEO efforts? The possibilities are endless.

## National Press Turns to Harmelin for Insights

The national press has increasingly been turning to Harmelin Media for intelligent, insightful analysis of today's media. Most recently, Harmelin Vice President and Research Director, Bernie Shimkus, was interviewed in the national press for his views on Arbitron's Portable People Meter. Shimkus, nationally recognized as an expert in PPM methodology, has spoken extensively on the impact of the PPM conversion to various groups across the nation.

The October 23 *Media Life* published Diego Vasquez's extensive interview with Mr. Shimkus about "what the PPM brings to media buyers." Almost a month later, *Media Life* called Harmelin's research director for his opinions on Nielsen's announcement that the company will begin radio audience measurements in fifty small and mid-sized markets. Bernie was quoted as saying, "I can't see anyone preferring to use a diary service to a PPM service."

Well said, Mr. Shimkus, you've made Harmelin Media proud.

## Around the Harmelin Water Cooler

A Completely Unscientific Survey of Harmelin Media Employees... **This Month's Question:**



### What were the top 5 media events of 2008?

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Baseball's World Series</b> | <b>88%</b> |
| <b>Election Night</b>          | <b>85%</b> |
| <b>The Super Bowl</b>          | <b>42%</b> |
| <b>Economic Meltdown</b>       | <b>38%</b> |
| <b>Presidential Debates</b>    | <b>35%</b> |
| <b>Summer Olympics</b>         | <b>35%</b> |
| <b>VP Debates</b>              | <b>27%</b> |
| <b>Tina Fey as Sara Palin</b>  | <b>23%</b> |
| <b>Democratic Convention</b>   | <b>19%</b> |
| <b>Republican Convention</b>   | <b>15%</b> |