

Viewpoints

The least sporting sport

Utah sports writers, University of Utah alumni and Attorney General Mark Shurtleff have convinced me. The Bowl Championship Series is bogus. There is no clear champion in NCAA Division I football. The only real way to crown a champion is through a single elimination tournament. No other format produces a true champion.

Unfortunately, this conclusion makes it impossible for me to enjoy many other sports. I have to conclude that NASCAR is phoney because the NASCAR championship is awarded to the driver who accumulates the most points during a racing season. Drivers get points for both winning races and leading a lap during a race. Last year, Jimmie Johnson earned his third straight championship despite the fact that he finished in 15th place in NASCAR's grand finale race. Even with this finish, Johnson had earned enough points throughout the season to be crowned champion. The selection process looks suspiciously similar to the

Top of Utah Voices



Michael Vaughan

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Commentary

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BCS.

I am really troubled that I have to abandon my passion for the Tour de France. I have followed the Tour for more than 25 years. My interest began when Greg Lemond was battling Bernard Hinault, and the only way to follow the Tour in the United States was to read about the prior day's race results in the newspaper. I stuck with the Tour during the doping scandals. I was looking forward to Lance Armstrong's comeback.

Yet, if the BCS isn't valid,

you have to draw the same conclusion about the Tour de France. You see, the winner of the Tour is also determined by a fairly elaborate point system. It is actually possible to win the Tour without winning any single stage of the Tour de France.

I guess I can still enjoy boxing. The boxing title is on the line every time the reigning champion steps in the ring. If the challenger beats the champion, the challenger becomes the champion. You can't question that system.

Just imagine if the same system were used in college football. At the start of this season, LSU was the reigning champion. LSU plowed through the competition until early October. On Oct. 11, Florida defeated LSU by 30 points, and that ruined LSU's quest to be a repeat champion.

Florida then proceeded to go undefeated for the remainder of the season. That is interesting. Using the same system used in boxing, Florida would be the reigning champion at the end of

the regular season and through all the bowl games. Darn, I guess that makes boxing as bogus as the BCS.

Someone better call Mark Shurtleff and tell him to add NASCAR, bike racing and professional boxing to the list of defendants he plans to sue.

As I wrap this piece up, I will suspend the sarcasm and say that my intent isn't to diminish the accomplishments of the University of Utah football team nor to suggest that a college football playoff system is unworkable. Clearly, a college football playoff system is workable, and in many years it would produce results that differ from than the current BCS system.

Different sports use different methods to crown a champion. Professional football uses a one-and-done playoff system very similar to proposals for a college football playoff. Professional baseball and professional basketball use a best-of-seven playoff system that reduces the likelihood of upsets and increases the chances that the

better coached and more talented team will prevail. Is one system unambiguously better than the other? No. Do they produce different results? Yes.

In most sports, both the athletes and the fans acknowledge that alternative paths to championship could be devised and that different paths would produce different results.

At the same time, most sports support whatever system happens to be in place at any given time, and they celebrate the team or individual that emerges as victorious.

College football fans are singular in their unwillingness to accept the rules that happen to prevail. While it would be perfectly fine to work to change the BCS and implement a playoff system, it would be less than sporting to refuse to acknowledge that the present system does, indeed, produce a true champion.

It is time for Ute fans and Texas fans and USC fans to swallow hard and congratulate coach Meyer and his Gators for a job well done.