Ranking football teams is an art, not a science. Football is popular in some measure because the outcome of a game between reasonably matched teams is so often decided by emotional commitment, momentum, injuries and the “unexpected bounce of the ball.” In any ranking system, perfection or consensus is not possible and the physical impact of the game on student athletes prevents elaborate playoff systems of multiple games. For purposes of any four team playoff, the process will inevitably need to select the four best teams from among several with legitimate claims to participate.

**Proposed Selection Process:**
Establish a committee that will be instructed to place an emphasis on winning conference championships, strength of schedule and head-to-head competition when comparing teams with similar records and pedigree (treat final determination like a tie-breaker; apply specific guidelines).

The criteria to be provided to the selection committee must be aligned with the ideals of the commissioners, Presidents, athletic directors and coaches to honor regular season success while at the same time providing enough flexibility and discretion to select a non-champion or independent under circumstances where that particular non-champion or independent is unequivocally one of the four best teams in the country.

When circumstances at the margins indicate that teams are comparable, then the following criteria must be considered:

- Championships won
- Strength of schedule
- Head-to-head competition (if it occurred)
- Comparative outcomes of common opponents (without incenting margin of victory)

We believe that a committee of experts properly instructed (based on beliefs that the regular season is unique and must be preserved; and that championships won on the field and strength of schedule are important values that must be incorporated into the selection process) has very strong support throughout the college football community.

Under the current construct, polls (although well-intended) have not expressed these values; particularly at the margins where teams that have won head-to-head competition and championships are sometimes ranked behind non-champions and teams that have lost in head-to-head competition. Nuanced mathematical formulas ignore some teams who “deserve” to be selected.

As we expand from two teams to four teams, we want to establish a human selection committee that: (1) will be provided a clear set of guidelines; (2) will be expected to take the facts of each case and specifically apply the guidelines; and (3) will be led by a Chairperson who will be expected to explain publicly the committee’s decisions.

Some of the guidelines and protocols expected to be established to guide the committee would include, but not be limited to, the following:
While it is understood that committee members will take into consideration all kinds of data including polls, committee members will be required to discredit polls wherein initial rankings are established before competition has occurred;

Any polls that are taken into consideration by the selection committee must be completely open and transparent to the public;

Strength of schedule, head-to-head competition and championships won must be specifically applied as tie-breakers between teams that look similar;

Committee members associated with any team under consideration during the selection process will be required to recuse themselves from any deliberations associated with that team;

We would expect this same set of principles to be applied, particularly at the margins (teams 10-11-12).

5-5-2014
(When creating the College Football Playoff in June of 2012, the 11 university presidents, 10 conference commissioners and Notre Dame athletics directors unanimously adopted the preceding document which established the guiding principles and the basis for selecting and ranking teams. When the selection committee later added more details and specific operating procedures, those resulted in this full “College Football Playoff Selection Committee Protocol.”)

**College Football Playoff Selection Committee Protocol**

1. **Mission.** The committee’s task will be to select the best teams, rank the teams for inclusion in the playoff and selected other bowl games and then assign the teams to sites.

2. **Principles.** The committee will select the teams using a process that distinguishes among otherwise comparable teams by considering:
   * Conference championships won,
   * Strength of schedule,
   * Head-to-head competition,
   * Comparative outcomes of common opponents (without incenting margin of victory), and,
   * Other relevant factors such as key injuries that may have affected a team’s performance during the season or likely will affect its postseason performance.

3. **Voting Process.** The voting process generally will include seven rounds of ballots through which the committee members first will select a small pool of teams to be evaluated, then will rank those teams, with the top-ranked teams being placed in the rankings in groups of three or four. Individual committee members’ rankings will be compiled into a composite ranking. Each committee member will independently evaluate an immense amount of information during the process. This evaluation will lead to individual qualitative and quantitative opinions that will inform each member’s votes.

4. **Number of Teams to Be Ranked.** The committee will rank 25 teams. If no champion of a non-contract conference is among that group on Selection Day, then the committee will compare the five conference champions against each other. The highest ranked of those five teams will be the representative.

5. **Meeting Schedule.** The committee will meet in person weekly beginning generally at mid-season to produce interim rankings before selection weekend.

   The dates for the fall of 2018 are as follows:

   Monday and Tuesday, October 29-30
   Monday and Tuesday, November 5-6
   Monday and Tuesday, November 12-13
   Monday and Tuesday, November 19-20
   Monday and Tuesday, November 26-27
   Friday-Sunday, November 30-December 2

6. **Point Persons for Gathering Information.** The committee has assigned two members to be the “point persons” to gather material about the teams in each conference and the independent teams. The process will assure that the committee fully reviews each team and that no information is overlooked.
The point persons will ensure that (1) the committee has complete, detailed information about each team, and (2) the conferences and independent institutions have an effective and efficient channel for providing facts to the committee.

The committee wishes to be clear about the role of the point persons. They are not and will not be advocates for teams in any conference or for any independent institution. They will not speak on behalf of any conference or institution during the committee’s deliberations or represent any conference’s or independent institution’s interests during those deliberations. Their function is to gather information and ensure that it is available to the committee. Their role as a liaison to a particular conference or independent institution is purely for the purpose of objective fact-gathering.

The point persons will communicate with conference staff members on three information-gathering teleconferences during the regular season: one before the first ranking, one before the fourth ranking and one the week before selection day. Outside of these teleconferences, there will be no contact between the point persons and any conference staff member, or vice-versa, but the conference may relay information to the committee through the CFP staff.

Following were the point persons for the 2017 season: (2018 assignments to be determined)

American – Chris Howard and Tyrone Willingham
Atlantic Coast – Tyrone Willingham and Steve Wieberg
Big Ten – Rob Mullens and Tom Jernstedt
Big 12 – Dan Radakovich and Frank Beamer
Conference USA – Herb Deromedi and Chris Howard
Mid-American – Jeff Bower and Frank Beamer
Mountain West – Steve Wieberg and Rob Mullens
Pac-12 – Jeff Long and Jeff Bower
Southeastern – Bobby Johnson and Herb Deromedi
Sun Belt – Tom Jernstedt and Gene Smith
Independents – Gene Smith and Bobby Johnson

7. Metrics. There will not be one single metric to assist the committee. Rather, the committee will consider a wide variety of data and information.

8. Participants. There shall be no limit on the number of teams that may participate from one conference in the playoff semifinals and the associated bowl games.


A. The team ranked No. 1 by the selection committee will play team No. 4 in the semifinals. Team No. 2 will meet team No. 3.

B. When assigning teams to sites, the committee will place the top two seeds at the most advantageous sites, weighing criteria such as convenience of travel for its fans, home-crowd advantage or disadvantage and general familiarity with the host city and its stadium. Preference will go to the No. 1 seed.
10. **Pairings for Selected Other Bowl Games.**

A. All displaced conference champions and the highest-ranked champion from a non-contract conference, as ranked by the committee, will participate in selected other bowl games and will be assigned to those games by the committee. If berths in the selected other bowl games remain available after those teams have been identified, the highest-ranked other teams, as ranked by the committee, will fill those berths in rank order.

(Note: A “displaced conference champion” is a champion of a contract conference that does not qualify for the playoff in a year when its contract bowl hosts a semifinal game.)

B. The committee shall create the best matchups in these bowl games in light of the following considerations. None of these considerations shall affect the ranking of teams. Also, none of these considerations will be controlling in determining the assignment of teams to available bowl games.

* The committee will use geography as a consideration in the pairing of teams and assigning them to available bowl games.

* The committee will attempt to avoid regular-season rematches when assigning teams to bowls.

* To benefit fans and student-athletes, the committee will attempt to avoid assigning a team, or conference, or the highest-ranked champion of a non-contract conference, to the same bowl game repeatedly.

* The committee will consider regular-season head-to-head results when assigning teams to bowls.

* The committee will consider conference championships when assigning teams to bowls.

C. When not hosting semifinals, the Orange, Rose and Sugar bowls (the “contract bowls”) will make their own pairings outside the CFP arrangement. Generally, they will take the champion of their contracted conference; if that champion qualifies for the playoff, the bowl will then choose a replacement from that conference.

Orange Bowl: ACC vs. SEC, Big Ten or Notre Dame*
Rose Bowl: Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Sugar Bowl: SEC vs. Big 12

* In non-semifinal years, the following will inform the Orange Bowl’s selection of the opponent for the ACC Champion or next highest ranked ACC team not in the playoff:

  • After the Sugar Bowl and Rose Bowl have chosen, the highest ranked available non-playoff, non-champion of the SEC or Big Ten or Notre Dame.

  • Over the eight years, a minimum of three SEC and three Big Ten appearances must occur, and a maximum of two Notre Dame appearances can occur.
11. Army-Navy Policy.

If the committee believes the result of the Army-Navy game could affect Army’s or Navy’s ranking and therefore its place in the playoff or its selection as the group of five representative, only the pairings that affect Army or Navy would be delayed until after the Army-Navy game. In such case, the committee would convene by teleconference as soon as practicable after conclusion of the game, and would announce its revised rankings that Saturday night.

12. Selection Sequence.

* Selection committee will rank teams 1-25.
* Selection committee will place teams in the playoff semifinals bowls.
* Contract bowls will fill their berths in accordance with their contracts.
* Selection committee will assign teams to remainder of the Cotton, Fiesta and Peach Bowl berths.

13. Recusal Policy. If a committee member or an immediate family member (e.g., spouse, sibling or child) (a) is compensated by a school, (b) provides professional services for a school or (c) is on the coaching staff or administrative staff at a school or is a football student-athlete at a school, that member will be recused. Such compensation shall include not only direct employment, but also current paid consulting arrangements, deferred compensation (e.g., contract payments continuing after employment has ended) or other benefits. The committee will have the option to add other recusals if special circumstances arise.

A recused member shall not participate in any votes involving the team from which the individual is recused.

A recused member is permitted to answer only factual questions about the institution from which the member is recused, but shall not be present during any deliberations regarding that team’s selection or seeding.

Recused members shall not participate in discussions regarding the placement of the recused team into a bowl game.

Following were the recusals for the 2017 season: (2018 recusals to be determined)

Arkansas – Jeff Long
Central Michigan – Herb Deromedi
Clemson – Dan Radakovich
Duke – Tyrone Willingham
Georgia – Frank Beamer
Missouri – Jeff Long
Ohio State – Gene Smith
Oregon – Rob Mullens
Southern Mississippi – Jeff Bower
14. **Terms.** Generally, the members shall serve three-year terms. Until the rotation has been achieved, certain terms may be shorter or longer. Terms shall be staggered to allow for an eventual rotation of members. Members will not be eligible for reappointment, but a member’s term may be extended one year if the member would serve as chair in what otherwise would be his/her final year.

**Terms Expire February 2019**

Bower, Jeff  
Deromedi, Herb  
Johnson, Bobby

**Terms Expire February 2020**

Beamer, Frank  
Howard, Chris  
Mullens, Rob  
Smith, Gene

**Terms Expire February 2021**

Boivin, Paola  
Castiglione, Joe  
Hatfield, Ken  
Lott, Ronnie  
Stansbury, Todd  
Stricklin, Scott

15. **Committee Chair.** The Management Committee selects the chair of the committee.

1-16-2018
College Football Playoff
Selection Committee Voting Process

1. Each committee member will create a list of the 30 teams he or she believes to be the best in the country, in no particular order. Teams listed by three or more members will remain under consideration. At the conclusion of any round, other teams can be added to the group of teams under consideration by a vote of three or more members.

2. Each member will list the best six teams, in no particular order. The six teams receiving the most votes will comprise the pool for the first ranking step. This is known as the “listing step.”

3. In the first ranking step, each member will rank those six teams, one through six, with one being the best. The best team in each member’s ranking will receive one point; second-best, two points, etc. The members’ rankings will be added together and the three teams receiving the fewest points will become the top three seeds. The three teams that were not seeded will be held over for the next ranking step.

4. Each member will list the six best remaining teams, in no particular order. The three teams receiving the most votes will be added to the three teams held over to comprise the next ranking step.

5. Steps No. 3 and 4 will be repeated until 25 teams have been seeded. There will be seven rounds of voting; each round will consist of a “listing step” and a “ranking step.”

Notes:

A. Any “recused” member can participate in Step No. 1, but cannot list the team for which he or she is recused. “Recused” teams (i.e., teams for whom a member has been recused) receiving at least two votes in Step No. 1 will remain under consideration.

B. A recused member can participate in Step No. 2, but cannot list the recused team. If a recused team is within one vote of advancing to the pool for the next ranking step, that team will be pooled with the team (or teams) receiving the fewest votes. If necessary, a “tie-breaker” ranking vote will be conducted among those teams to identify the team or teams that would be added to the pool.

C. A recused member cannot participate in Step No. 3 if the recused team is in the pool.

D. Between each step, the committee members will conduct a thorough evaluation of the teams before conducting the vote.

E. After each round is completed, any group of three or more teams can be reconsidered if more than three members vote to do so. Step No. 3 would be repeated to determine if adjustments should be made.

F. After the first nine teams are seeded, the number of teams listed in Step No. 2 will be increased to eight, and the number of teams seeded and held in Steps No. 3 and 4 will be increased to four.

G. At any time in the process, the number of teams to be included in a pool may be increased or decreased with approval of more than eight members of the committee.
H. After any round of voting, a team or teams may be added to the initial pool by an affirmative vote of three or more committee members.

I. All votes will be by secret ballot.

BH: 8-24-2015