

Out Of Bounds, Episode XLVIII: We Are The Champions

Written by {ga=larshancock}

Friday, November 30 2012 2:50 AM - Last Updated Friday, November 30 2012 10:55 AM



Congratulations to the Ohio State Buckeyes, 2012-2013 NCAA FBS Football Champions!

It's unusual to have already locked up the national title before the end of November, before conference championships or even a single bowl game has been played, yet the system has provided the Buckeyes just that this year. Which obviously means the system is broken, and which will obviously be the subject of the rant in the space below. But, hey, national champs! Woo! Print the t-shirt, have the parade, pop the champagne – the Buckeyes are champions!

Okay, some of you skeptically are wondering how I came to this conclusion. No poll has tOSU #1, and they are ineligible to play in the “national championship game”. It is impossible, therefore, for them to be “national champions” as the BCS defines the term, and in just about every scenario the Buckeyes will finish no greater than #2 in the one poll that can vote for them. So how exactly do I arrive at them already being national champions?

First of all, let's admit Notre Dame is going to get the snot knocked out of them in the “national championship” game. This will leave the Buckeyes as the only team without a loss, and therefore the national champion. Alabama or Georgia will have lost before – Georgia got blown out 35-7 – making them ineligible to say they are better than all other teams. Was the Buckeyes' schedule maybe easier? Who cares. Almost every team on the schedule was good enough to win on any given Saturday, and they didn't. Ohio State did. That level of consistency is says “champion”.

Oh, you want to argue Alabama or Georgia would knock the snot out of the Buckeyes if they

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played? Your argument is invalid, because 1) they aren't going to play, and 2) even if tOSU wasn't on probation, the BCS would likely have excluded them anyway. In 2013, we would never have known if this is true or not, and therefore cannot be used as a legitimate argument. They lost, we didn't, we're the champs.

What if Notre Dame does manage to win? They will be undefeated and be unanimous #1 picks in every poll. For all intents and purposes, though, they played the same schedule as the Buckeyes, and had similar margins of victory. Sadly, even if you remove the specious probation, the Buckeyes and Irish wouldn't have met on the field with both undefeated, leaving this question open in either case. The polls are by definition a flawed method of crowning a champion, and as such the Ohio State University can and should be considered co-national champions.

There are really only two things that invalidate my argument: the bowl ban and the BCS. To some, that is akin to saying there are only two things that make living in Haiti tough – the lack of food and the lack of jobs. I consider both of these things completely irrelevant, however, and in fact each negates the other.

Any good Ohioan knows the probation is pure and utter bullshit. Some guys sold their own property. Who is the NCAA to say this is illegitimate commerce? What if they sold their blood plasma (a tried and true college fundraising scheme)? If Terrelle Pryor can turn a \$30 jersey into a \$300 jersey with his autograph, why should the NCAA interfere with that? If he spent an hour with a bedazzler doing the same thing, no problem from the NCAA, right, so how is his signature any different in concept? Rumor has it Archie Griffin was Columbus' leading insurance salesman in the mid seventies, and God bless him for moving a lot of product for his company. Who cares that he used his fame as an athlete to do such, and profited off of it (the NCAA would surely frown on that these days)? How is that any different than if he invented the Flowbee or Chia Pet back then and used his marketing savvy to get rich?

And if the principle of amateur athletics is so important to the NCAA, why are athletes like Brandon Weeden and Chris Weinke allowed to play minor league baseball – i.e. get paid and sponsored to play a sport – and still have NCAA eligibility? Isn't that far more egregious to the concept of amateurism than selling a little gold trinket?

Ah, but amateurism is important in principle, so we must keep the kids away from making money off their athletic accomplishments. You can have that NCAA if you can prove you're not

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a greedy whore-mongering organization exploiting them for money pure and simple. Which leads us to the BCS, and which absolutely proves the concept of amateurism, and the attached probation of Ohio State, is complete and utter crap.

The BCS is an intentionally flawed method of choosing a national championship, admittedly to protect the financial interests of the major conferences. It's Augusta National excluding minorities and women (with the exception of the token ones the government forces you to admit), an old-boys network to preserve power and wealth in one spot. It cares not about producing a legitimate champion, no, it cares only about the money, and keeping as much of it in the hands of the major power conferences as it can. When a system like the BCS exists specifically to horde the unholy amounts of money generated by NCAA football, claims on the preservation of the integrity of the game and of amateur athletics are laughable at best, and at worst criminal.

I reject the Buckeyes' probation. I reject the BCS. I reject the polls and system that excludes and discriminates against the Ohio State University football program. I recognize accomplishment on the field, the place championships should be decided, and with this viewpoint, the Buckeyes are undisputed national champions (with the Irish playing for a shot to be co-champions). Any other view is folly.

So congratulations to the Ohio State University, Lars Hancock's 2013 NCAA FBS Champions. Commemorative t-shirts are available via email if you want one.

Anyway, off to the questions.

Soon, I would like to plan a particular day when my wife and I can enjoy the maximum amount of endorphins possible. This will involve a 4 mile run, and some afternoon private time with each other.

I plan to get some of that Xochitl salsa Hikohadon suggested. What else would you suggest I plan for that day? How many different ways can we legally generate endorphins? –googleeph2

Endorphins are awesome. You can generate them from intense pleasure, intense pain, strenuous athletic activity, fear, and general thrill-seeking. You're off to a good start – the run

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will get you to an endorphin-rich state as long as you push yourself. If you both can run it easily in 10 minutes a mile, run it at a 8:30 pace. Have each of you take a shot of deer antler extract HGH-precursor (which I've been using for over a month with fantastic results) before to give you the stamina to get it done – that alone gives you an endorphin rush. Hot sauce is an excellent way of generating non-destructive pain. I refer to the effect as a “peppergasm” where if you get yourself in enough pain the endorphin buildup will outlast the pain giving you an orgasmic-like feeling afterward. And sex, yes, great idea. Make sure you do it multiple times, and in situations where you could get caught – just off the trail, in the Metroparks, in a movie theater – something to add a little fear, excitement, and danger to the process.

You're missing danger from your plan. On endorphin day, do skydiving – that is the most sure-fire way to generate gallons of the stuff. If you've never done it, let me briefly give you a rundown on the endorphin rush. Get on the plane in flight suit – “I'm really going to do this??!”. Level 3. You're in a rickety plane that you feel safer jumping out of than landing in. Level 4. Wait, is the pilot actually wearing a parachute (true story – this happened to me). Level 5. Plane levels off, it's go time. Level 6. And then at this point, something weird happens that you've never experienced in a commercial flight – the door opens. Level 8. You inch over and look straight down 10,000 feet with nothing holding you back, Level 9 and then Geronimo. The endorphins are at eleven.

There are other ways to do danger – Cedar Point's roller coasters and the slingshot are great endorphin generators. You could do a NASCAR racing experience where you take a stock car around a track at over 100 mph. But you want to maximize it, jump out of a plane.

How about combining exercise and danger? Go rock climbing. Pure adrenaline the whole day. By the end of your session, you'll be climbing up what you had previously thought as a sheer facing, seeing zit-sized bumps on rocks as solid footholds, and using every muscle in your body to achieve amazing things, in total fear the whole time, and using every muscle in your body.

What about paintball? You're hunting, and you're the hunted. All the fun of being in a real war without all the things that suck about being in a real war. It's the most dangerous game, in a way that isn't dangerous. For extra endorphins, wear only a thin shirt, because those little balls really sting.

If it's winter, try skiing. While I don't recommend skiing above your level, if you do it right you can get good bursts of speed going multiple times, and feel you are on the edge of control.

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At night, curl up on the couch with a good horror flick. Make the house completely dark – turn off every light – so that every creak or gust of wind turns your movie into an IMAX experience where you are in the movie.

Make sure you drink copious amounts of Red Bull and Vodka throughout the day too – the drunk accentuates the experience as does the energy burst from the Red Bull. Spin up as you're spinning down just cranking out the endorphins.

On Wednesday, I want to make my wife chicken piccata and whatever the hell else you make with chicken piccata. I can't cook but I can follow instructions. Can you help me out? –motherscratcher

I'm on a plane now as I write this. If something goes wrong, like the pilot goes nuts and kills everyone in the cabin, I'm fully ready to take over and land this thing. I'm ready to step up and be the hero – I can't fly a plane, and never have in the past, but I can follow directions pretty well and as long as the guy on the ground tells me what buttons to push and what levers to pull, I can get this baby on the ground. I'm sure of it. And I'll never know I'm wrong because I'll be one of the first to die in the fireball of my own arrogance. Why didn't I just leave it to the nerd that has played Flight Simulator on his computer every day for the past 30 years???

Similarly, you can't cook, but you want to make Chicken Piccata? Okay, I'm ground control and I'm going to talk you in, but know that in the background I've dialed 9-1 on my phone and I'm waiting to hear the screams so I can dial the other 1. The fire trucks are on full alert, your next of kin has been notified, and, um, I have full confidence in you! Believe in yourself and, um, you can do anything!

So let's get this bitch on the ground, shall we? First thing you want to do is take some chicken breasts and cut them into thin cutlets. This is an important step because (a) the thin cutlets are important to the texture of the recipe, (b) thin cutlets cook evenly and have a nice surface area for browning, (c) thin cutlets have a better sauce-to-meat ratio, and (d) you'll probably kill your wife with salmonella if you try to cook a whole breast. The best technique for doing this is to take the breast and lay it flat on the cutting board, place your hand on top of the breast and hold your knife flat and parallel to your hand and the board, and cut through the breast. Note that you will not be using this technique because having you operate a knife like that would be like giving

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a monkey a machine gun. You're going to use two cutting boards, put the chicken between them, and drag the knife through the chicken. Ideally you hit it in the middle and produce two thin cutlets from each breast half, but again, that's not going to happen, so you'll keep hacking through it until you are left with no piece thicker than half an inch.

While you've got the cutting board out, take one shallot and mince it up fine. Do this by removing the brown papery stuff on the outside, and cut it in half from the root to the tip (so each side has half the root in it) so there is a flat side. Drag the knife vertically along... you know what, you'll never cut a shallot. Get some pre-minced garlic in a jar.

This may be as good of a time as any to give you an ingredient list from the grocery store. You'll need one pound of chicken breasts, a half a cup of flour (don't buy this, it's in the pantry. Taste it to make sure it isn't sugar before you use it), a small jar of capers (salt packed preferably, but brined if necessary), a small bunch of Italian parsley, a shallot, er, small jar of minced garlic, a box of chicken stock, a couple of lemons, and some olive oil (which you should have as well).

Now get three plates out of the pantry. On one of them, take half a cup of flour out of the flour bin and place it carefully on the plate, and sprinkle about a teaspoon of salt and a few good grinds of pepper, mixing well. Put each hacked chunk of chicken in the flour on each side until they are covered and place the chickens on a different plate in a single layer (multiple layers will yield flour ball clumps which will burn on the outside and be raw on the inside and generally taste like crap).

Meanwhile, take the capers and put a good couple of tablespoons of them in a glass of water. You want to get the salt off them and/or rinse out that brine so they taste like capers.

Time for the pan. Ordinarily I'd recommend a non-nonstick pan to get good caramelization from all the meat and flour bits, but you're going to burn those little bits all to hell, so let's try to save them with a nonstick pan. Put just enough oil in there to barely coat the bottom when the pan is cool. Pay attention to each and every word in that sentence. You're not making McNuggets, so don't put three inches of oil in the pan to deep fry these things into oblivion. You're delicately pan searing and making a pan sauce. Heat the pan to medium until the oil is hot – test by poking it with a piece of dry spaghetti – when it sizzles in contact with the oil, you're good. If the oil starts smoking, remove the pan from the heat and call for a pizza – it's too hot and you've just made it taste nasty. Of course, if it is too cold, you're going to make oil sodden poached chicken nastiness. So watch your temperature. When it is right, slowly drape the chicken cutlets

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into the pan, rolling them away from you so you don't get splashed with oil. You will have hot oil spitting on you at this point. Be prepared for this, and be manly. Don't scream and throw the cutlets into the pan like you're Mark Price raining threes. Your wussiness will burn your house down. One layer of cutlets, not overlapping, at a time. Cook for maybe two minutes a side assuming you've got them appropriately thin, flip using kitchen tongs, and remove to a clean plate. Repeat until all the chicken is pan seared, noting the oil level between each searing – if the oil gets low, add more.

Now you need to see how good you were at being delicate. Look at your pan, smell it. Is it black and smelling of charcoal? If so, you burned all the tasty bits – note I fully expect this to be the case for you. No biggie – dump out the oil, wipe down the pan and start clean. If you didn't burn the yummy bits, congratulations! Now get about a teaspoon of the garlic and the capers (water removed) and stir them in the pan with a wooden spoon until the garlic just barely starts to turn brown. Then immediately add a cup of chicken stock, and stir thoroughly, making sure to scrape the bottom of the pan (assuming you didn't burn the stuff). Squeeze the juice of a lemon or two in there (taste it) and let it cook. You can add butter if you want to make it creamier and silkier, but that is unnecessary. Toss in a handful of parsley leaves you rip off by hand, and then toss in the chicken cutlets one last time right before serving to warm them back up (making sure to pour in the juice that is on the plate under them).

Good luck. Make sure your insurance premium is paid up!

What are the best five Sandwiches, and if PBJ isn't among them, where would it rank? –motherscratcher

1)The Panini. Cleveland has a different definition of this term, considering the Panini a sandwich stuffed with cole slaw and fries. While this definition is indeed wonderful, and would make the top five if I was hammered, this is not the Panini of which I speak here. I speak of the traditional Italian grilled/pressed cheese-laden sandwich. Grilled cheese is great, but taking the added step of mashing it together to deliver crispiness while ensuring the integrity of the meats and other love inside.... oh hell yeah. You could take smoked sewer rat meat and put it in a Panini press with some sharp provolone and garlicy aioli and have a delicious sandwich. Mmm, sewer rat. And that is three words I never thought I'd ever write...

2)The Hamburger. Burgers should be #1 but the recent craze of gourmet burgers has had me binging on them like a mad dog in a meat market. True story: I went with friends to the Ohio

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State-Florida national championship debacle in Phoenix some years ago, and on the way out of town, we stopped at the Heart Attack Grill

. We had triple bypass burgers, which if you do the math involves over 3,000 calories of meat and other finery, not counting the fries. I had the meat sweats for days, and couldn't eat a burger for about a month. That's about where I am now with all the great burger options out there. Testament to a sandwich that allows binging.

3)PB&J. I have PB&J about once a week, minimum. The blend of salty, savory, slight acidity, and sweet is culinary perfection. I like to toast the bread for extra umami and make them triple deckers. Do you remember when you were in Elementary School and you used to put your Doritos inside your PB&J? So good. Still good. The PB&J is both immature and mature, a reminder of your youth yet sophisticated enough culinarily to still be appreciated.

4)The Cheesesteak. There are hundreds of variations on this, including those that involve chicken, but any long sub roll filled with meat and melted cheese is pornography for your mouth. Add something spicy to the mix, like jalapenos or make the cheese more of a queso, and the sandwich goes into an entirely new dimension of deliciousness.

5)The Meatball Sub. Who doesn't love meatballs? Terrorists, that's who. The genius that converted spaghetti and meatballs into a sandwich should be a saint, or at least obscenely rich. Or king. Something. Getting face down and dirty saucy in a meatball sub is a true life pleasure. If you really want to make me moan, and please don't admit to this if you do, add pepperoni to the sub. Oh yeah.

Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com, tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock.