

FCS ADA | CORNER

College football is much more than a three-month season that begins when players arrive on campus in early August and ends, in our division, as the holiday season reaches its crescendo. It is a life cycle that repeats itself each year, and for those of us lucky enough to be associated with the sport for a sustained period of time, this pattern becomes ingrained.



Peter Fields

During the darkest days of winter, the frenzy of recruiting dominates the college football landscape. Spring brings the hopefulness of spring practice, and after a respite on the booster golf circuit, conference media days swing into gear, and before we know it we're enjoying the jolt of energy and renewal that arrives with the return of student-athletes to campus and the pageantry and excitement of another season.



Our fans continue to tell us they enjoy the Football Championship Subdivision. Of the 141 programs that competed at, or are transitioning to our level, four averaged at least 20,000 fans per home game, and 32 drew more than 10,000 a game. Our championship game drew more than 24,000 fans to a neutral site, and the atmosphere at FCS stadiums during the December playoff run remains exhilarating and rewarding.

While we are proud of FCS football, we face profound change on many different fronts. The most significant and glaring change arrives next December when our playoff system

expands to 20 teams. The Northeast Conference and Big South Conference have earned automatic berths into the playoffs, and the expansion also accommodates two additional at-large teams, while providing the top four seeds with first-round byes. This change provides many more deserving student-athletes the opportunity to compete for a championship each season.

The face of FCS football continues to change in a very real way as we welcome new or upgrading programs in all regions of the country. The addition of Championship Subdivision entries from the Dakotas to the Carolinas, from Texas to New England, makes our division stronger and our product more appealing. Most importantly, it increases opportunity to experience the challenges and thrills of college football while gaining the chance to compete for a true national championship.

Away from the field, we continually deal with academic achievement and retention issues. While the Academic Progress Rate's (APR) most dramatic impact may have come among FCS schools, we can take pride in our recent APR success. Possible APR changes for football loom on the horizon, and they could be significant. In the end, though, the important thing is improving the system so that it helps our student-athletes achieve their goals both on and off the field. I believe that any changes implemented will be toward the goals of athletics and academic success of the student-athlete.

Thanks for this article to Peter Fields, director of athletics at Montana State University and FCS ADA President.

FCS ADA POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARS



Six finalists were selected for the **Ninth Annual FCS ADA \$5,000 postgraduate scholarship**. Two student-athletes, who will be announced in April, will receive postgraduate scholarships during the Association's annual membership meeting held in conjunction with the NACDA Convention, being held at the Marriott Hotel in Anaheim, Calif., June 22-25, 2010.

The finalists are Josh Cain, Jacksonville State University; Beau Hadley, Weber State University; Brandon Hellevang, University of North Dakota; Josh Mahoney, University of Northern Iowa; Andrew Miller, University of North Dakota; and Chris Rocco, Liberty University.