

Thanksgiving is one day that the NFL has on college football.

John - make edits
to publish - don't
tell Beeno!

There aren't many. The pageantry of college football almost every week features something more intriguing than Arizona-St. Louis or Buffalo-Houston, such as Thursday night's Backdoor Ball between Pitt and Western Virginia.

Thanksgiving, maybe the NFL championship Sunday, and the Super Bowl. Those are the days that I guzzle a lot of Iron City beer, chow down, and watch some lousy professional football.

In each case, those days are built around food. Thanksgiving is captained by the turkey, Matt Millen, who probably wonders why there aren't more penalties for late hits.

Speaking of turkeys, coach Woody Hayes used to dabble in military history. He once asked me and my good friend Lee Corso whether, during a conflict, one would use Greece to enter Turkey from the rear. Lee said "I always do!!!"

TOO MUCH INFORMATION!

The NFL championship game lends itself to a party and, of course, most Super Bowl parties come complete with all the trimmings, except maybe the USC Song Girls, who prefer to shave.

ADD

For the Song Girls, their sweaters, and the Dow Corning Corporation I am thankful -- almost as thankful as I've been to be privileged to have a front-row seat for America's greatest sport for the past 136 years, or since I was in elementary school.

This season has plenty of people giving thanks. We give thanks with them, for them and about them. To name a few:

- Penn State fans. They're grateful Joe Paterno acted like he was deaf and never listened to or heard all the complaints and suggestions that he should have retired by now. They're also grateful that Joe is blind, so he hasn't seen all the "for sale" signs on his lawn.
- USC fans. They're thankful Matt Leinart decided to forsake millions of dollars to return for a final season of fine poontang.
- Matt Leinart. That he had Reggie Bush to hand the ball off to, throw a swing pass to, and dump OJ's daughter Jessica Simpson off to when she started getting really annoying.
- John Mackovic Brown, whose Texas team might just be the best in the Southwest Conference.
- The Ivy League. For remembering that football players are also students who deserve a campus life -- something the players in big-time programs seldom get. You can't beat Wellesley girls. Not even if they ask you to.

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- Charles ~~White~~, who has brought a smile ~~and uproarious laughter~~ to the face of Touchdown Jesus, ~~thanks to the snot running down from Charles' nose during the Stanford game.~~ *IT WAS SWEAT!*
- Teams like Northwestern and Vanderbilt that don't have to win big every year but have proven they can be competitive in the best two top-to-bottom conferences in the country, ~~the ACC and the Pac-10.~~ ~~Maybe they'll join those conferences someday.~~
- The local TV weathermen, who have resisted asking for all 30 minutes of a newscast and have apparently settled for appearances every other segment. ~~During the 11 o'clock newscast I'm already dizzy enough as it is, my queasy stomach doesn't need all those animated moving cloud formations.~~ *TMI!*
- The Bowl Championship Series and its controversies, which keeps the talk-show hosts in business and gives them something to complain about in December, instead of railing on about the 14 teams still in the NFL wild-card hunt. ~~They should talk about important stuff, like who will be in the Humanitarian Bowl.~~
- LSU, for preserving the best night-game tradition in the country, ~~the fiery sacrifice of a virgin at midfield, under the direction of Nick Satan.~~
- Washington, for giving Tyrone ^WDillingham another chance ~~to lose 8 games.~~
- Georgia, for having the best mascot -- UGA -- in all of sports. And for not selling its stadium naming rights to Alpo, ~~or UGA to the Won Hung Duk restaurant.~~ *WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER LIMBAUGH INCIDENT*
- The Big East, for having basketball. ~~Maybe they'll get football someday.~~
- Steve Spurrier, who proved he belongs in college football like Mike Krzyzewski belongs in college basketball ~~and Johnny Walker belongs in my stomach.~~
- Notre Dame and USC, for giving us a game for the aged. ^S
- Fresno State and its coach, Pat Hill, who will make athletic directors think twice about scheduling the Bulldogs. ~~Opposing coaches and ADs don't like to have their visitors' locker rooms ransacked.~~
- Jim Tressel, for showing that coaches from the smaller schools like Youngstown State ~~Prison~~ can do it at the highest level.
- The Manning family. ~~Three great NFL quarterbacks: Archie, Peyton, and Peyton Manning Junior.~~
- Air Force, for not overreacting to Fisher DeBerry's comments. ~~Why did people get bent out of shape? Everyone knows that backs are faster. You ever see a lineman run?~~
- The service academies, as always, ~~for giving the football powers someone to beat up on.~~

- That major-league baseball doesn't extend its playoffs into December, because that would pre-empt the exciting GMAC Bowl.
- Harvard-Yale, for a memorable three-overtime game won by the Crimson. Before the true college football fan dies, he should get to a Harvard-Yale game. Speaking of dying, my goal is to be buried at halftime of a Harvard-Yale game. But only after I'm dead.
- Bobby Bowden, who still has a chance to force a Bowden-Paterno bowl if he can win the ACC and PSU lands in the Orange Bowl. (No jokes, please, on the loser getting a colostomy bag)
HAVING TO RETIRE
- To the Colorado mascot, Jenny McCartney, for behaving all year long ... and for her handlers, who have to be quick with the shovel and the saltpeter.
- That there's only one Terrell Owens and only one Drew Rosenhaus. And only one Trev Alberts, which frankly is one too many.
- That the policemen driving the motorcade escorting the Michigan team buses to Michigan Stadium had the good sense to be wearing the most famous helmet in all of sports: the construction helmet worn by that guy in the Village People. WE CHECKED - THE VILLAGE PEOPLE GUY WEARS AN FSU HELMET
- For the Stanford band and their lousy tackling skills.
- That more of the Congress' baseball steroid hearings aren't re-aired on tape. You don't see steroid freaks like Joe Canseco in football.
- For Michael Robinson, who showed more patience during Penn State's losing seasons than anyone who was not a four-eyed putz.
- For nonconference games like Stanford and Cal-Davis. OHIO STATE TEXAS
- For old-school shows like "Meet the Press," for Tim Russert's brilliant questioning, and for Bob Schieffer's insightful commentary on "Face the Nation." And the excellent political analysis of Boomer Esiason on that NFL show.
- For retiring Kansas State coach Bruce Snyder, who did more to build a program without previous football tradition than any coach in America. BILL
- The USC Song Girls, their red shoes, and the guy who invented underwire support. AND