

Top Rated-Recruiting Class: A reliable factor in determining BCS ranking?

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College athletic departments are spending increasing amounts of money on recruiting (Judson, James, & Aurand, 2004). The perception of a successful recruiting class is closely linked to the annual rankings of top recruiting classes in college football. While this perception provides university stakeholders an expectation of an incoming recruiting class, it has also prompted some schools to give coaches bonuses based on their position in recruiting rankings (Feldman, 2009). The purpose of this presentation is to determine if there was a relationship between recruiting class rankings for the four years prior to a school's top-25 finish in the final Bowl Championship Series (BCS) rankings. Data was collected from Rivals.com and Scout.com from 2002 to 2009. The four years of recruiting classes prior to a school's top- 25 finish in the BCS rankings comprises a majority of the student-athletes on the team.

The analysis found that school's finishing in the top-five of the BCS had an average recruiting class ranking of 16.315. This is compared to a recruiting class average rank of 34.965 and 36.685 for school's finishing between six-15 and 16-25 in the final BCS standings, respectively. Eighty-four percent finishing in the top-five of the BCS from 2005-2009 had an average recruiting class of 15th or better. This is significant due to the fact that each school that has finished in the top-five in the final BCS rankings from 2005-2009 played in a BCS bowl game, which provides a significant payout for the team and its conference. The payout for each of this year's BCS bowl games was \$17 million, compared to a payout of \$5.83 million in the Chick-fil-A Bowl (NCAA, 2010).

This research provides a unique vantage point of intercollegiate football. Although the primary purpose of this study was to see if a relationship exists between recruiting rankings and BCS ranking, the importance of other factors such as coaching staff, schedule and conference cannot be ignored. These factors contribute heavily to the success of an intercollegiate football program. However, this study found a relationship between teams finishing in the top-five of the final BCS standings and recruiting class rank due to the large disparity found between these teams and those finishing between six-25 in the final BCS standings. The financial implications of playing in a BCS bowl game are astounding, and securing a top-rated recruiting class is a major step in the process of building a national powerhouse.