



# Woelk: Matchup with Tide spices up bowl game for Buffaloes

By Neill Woelk

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No doubt, Colorado football fans who plan to go bowling with the Buffs would much rather be preparing for a trip to Arizona than contemplating a trek to Louisiana.

With all apologies to our new best friends from Shreveport, there's no question Tempe holds a little more sway in terms of travel destinations. Weather, attractions, convenience of travel — you name it, Tempe has the edge.

But, when viewed from the impact the Independence Bowl could have on CU's program, there's plenty to be said in favor of playing in Shreveport.

Start with the opponent: You'd be hard-pressed this morning to find a more appealing matchup for the Buffs than Alabama.

If the Buffs had gone to the Insight, they'd be playing Indiana. If they'd gone to the Texas Bowl, they'd be matched up with Houston. Neither is a program that jumps to mind when you mention college football powerhouses.

But Alabama is simply one of the most storied programs in college football history. It's where Bear Bryant coached (and lost to CU's Eddie Crowder in the 1969 Liberty Bowl). It's the school that produced Bart Starr, Joe Namath and Kenny Stabler.

And today, it's the school that is paying its head coach, Nick Saban, the astronomical sum of roughly \$4 million per year. That's what you call taking your football seriously.

It gives Colorado the kind of matchup that will have people across the nation tuning in simply out of curiosity.

Did we say tune in?

There's another plus. For those of you who never had plans of following the Buffs to a bowl game, odds are you'll be glad the Buffs are in the Independence simply because of television.

The Insight will be televised by the NFL Network. In case you haven't heard, that's the network that a number of major cable carriers are refusing to include in their basic lineup. The NFL Network is currently available to about 35 million homes in America, less than half of the number reached by ESPN — which will be broadcasting the Independence Bowl.

That means far more exposure for the Buffs.

And, speaking of exposure, the date of the Independence Bowl couldn't be better.

For starters, it's the only bowl game on Dec. 30. It will be going head-to-head with an NFL game, but anyone with an interest in college ball will likely be tempted by Colorado-Alabama.

Nope, it's not a warm-weather site that will be luring fans to spend a few days for vacation. No doubt, Colorado's following in Tempe would have been much, much bigger. The fact that CU has a huge alumni base in California and Arizona would have guaranteed a good showing at the Insight.

But strictly in terms of football, strictly in terms of giving the Buffs a chance to end their season with a great game against a foe that drips in history, the Independence isn't a bad way for the Buffs to finish off 2007.



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