

Anything but politics

Nov. 6, 2010

Whew! Have you about had your fill of politics? What about political ads on television? I don't know about you, but I got to the point where I was longing for the "good old days" when the airways were filled with pitches for hemorrhoid treatments, products found only on TV, and skits about stupid young males spending hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to guard a six pack of light beer that they could buy for \$5 at any party store in America.

Let's take a break, eh? How about thinking about some things that have nothing to do with politics?

To begin, let's turn to the world of sports and my favorite whipping boy, the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) for Division I football. Regular readers know my feelings: This is not a championship because two-thirds of the division's teams know before the season starts that they will not be permitted to play in the BCS bowls, that it's not a series because every BCS team plays only one extra game, and that it's absurd to end a regular season and then wait seven weeks to play a final game.

All that aside, my beef this time around is that the BCS, in its infinite wisdom, has decided that the Army vs. Navy game does not exist. Why? Because it will be played on December 11, one week after the final BCS standings are determined.

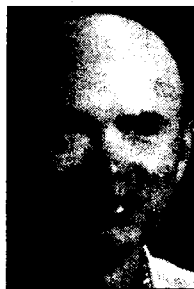
It does not matter that statistically several schools could be affected by not figuring in the result of the Army/Navy game, includ-

ing: TCU, Boise State, Air Force, and even Michigan State (because they play Notre Dame which plays both Army and Navy), and every other college that plays Army or Navy or plays a team that plays Army or Navy. Convoluted to be sure, but it's the BCS's formula, not mine.

It does not matter that Army vs. Navy has been played since 1890, traditionally on the first Saturday in December. The game was moved to the second Saturday in December last year by the NCAA itself! The NCAA, presumably in concert with the BCS, actually legislated that the game would no longer "count." What a travesty for one of America's great sports traditions.

Oh, and just to make things even more idiotic, when the BCS money is doled out to Division I schools, Notre Dame will get \$1.3 million even if it does not win another game or go to any bowl. Navy, which has already beaten Notre Dame this season, and Army, which gets a shot at the Irish on Nov. 20, will each get \$100,000.

When I'm not watching football on television I tune into my favorite sport — hockey. Did you know that a record 20.5 percent of NHL players are American this season? Canadians constitute 54.4 percent of roster



Neff
Zone

Jim
Neff

spots with Europeans garnering the remaining 25 percent. The states that have produced the most NHL players are Minnesota with 32 and Michigan with 25.

Speaking of participation, figures from the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations show that a record 7,628,377 students played high school sports last year. The top 10 states for participation were: Texas, Cali-

ifornia, New York, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, Florida and Minnesota.

Meanwhile, back at the schoolhouse, have you wondered why Finland finishes at the top of world education rankings? Perhaps an insight as to why might be in this finding by Linda Darling-Hammond in her book, "The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future."

She observes: "Prospective teachers are competitively selected from the pool of college graduates — only 15 percent of those who apply are admitted — and receive a three-year graduate-level teacher preparation program, entirely free of charge and with a living stipend. Unlike the United States, where teachers either go into debt to prepare for a profession that will pay them poorly or

enter with little or no training, Finland made the decision to invest in a uniformly well-prepared teaching force by recruiting top candidates and paying them to go to school. Slots in teacher training programs are highly coveted and shortages are virtually unheard of."

Still on the education front, a study by the JFK Medical Center Sleep Laboratory found that children who overuse electronic media before bedtime — from cellphones to video games — may have mood or learning problems during the day. The study found that the average teen studied sent/received 34 text or e-mail messages per night and 77 percent had trouble falling asleep. A suggested solution to the problem was to turn off all electronics a half-hour before bed. (It's called parenting.)

Finally, I recently learned that style expert Felix Mercado, who apparently dresses celebrities, has identified five "must-haves" for women's retro fashion for 2011. They are: Black-framed glasses, hourglass dresses, chunky sweaters, high-waisted slacks and kitten heels.

I'm still waiting for his must-haves for men. I'm pulling for relaxed fit jeans, hooded sweatshirts, baseball caps (with the brims properly curved), fleece vests, and Converse black high-top Chucks.

JIM NEFF is a local columnist. Comments to neffzone@gmail.com. Read Neff Zone columns online at www.neffzone.com/cadillacnews.