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THE FLIP SIDE

Tom Bowl ranks high in pasture

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It always gets lost in the jumble of all the Your Corporate Name Here Bowl games, but today is the highlight of the college football postseason for Mr. Flip:

The Tom Bowl, noon at Frank A. Schafer Field in Beal City, Mich.

Penn State vs. USC vs. Texas. For all the marbles - though for no actual payout and in all likelihood with no actual teams.

"The only major college bowl game not recognized by the NCAA," as it bills itself, the Tom Bowl is the dreamchild of Michigan State graduate Tom Cantrell.

Every year since 1989, he has used a mathematical formula to determine who should be playing in the national championship game and has invited those teams (sometimes three, sometimes the more traditional two) to his humble hometown, population 345, farm animals not included.

Some of the actual responses he has received:

Dec. 19, 2003: Thank you for sending me your proposal for Tom Bowl XV. As you might imagine, I found the name to be very catchy. Sincerely, Thomas C. Hansen, Pacific-10 Conference commissioner.

Dec. 19, 2002: While I will be unable to attend, please keep advised that we will keep a very close eye on the outcome of this game, notwithstanding the fact that there is no payout this year, or to my recollection, in any other year. Again, thanks for the opportunity to participate because, as one old coach once said, "There are no bad bowls." Regards, Jim Delany, Big Ten commissioner

Dec. 16, 1994: In checking past Tom Bowl results we note a lack of scoring. However, it's safe to bet that the string of scoreless ties will come to an end this year. Everyone knows Husker coach Tom Osborne goes for two in big bowl games. Cordially, Nebraska athletic director Bill Byrne

Trouble in paradise

Another sporting event dealing with rejection is the PGA Tour's season-opening Mercedes Championships at Kapalua Resort on Maui.

Among several stars who probably will not play, citing fatigue, are Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson.

Kapalua vice president Gary Planos has tried his best to remain upbeat, telling reporters: "We're not running a funeral, we're running a championship. We're going to show Kapalua to a freezing mainland."

Maybe he should move the event to some easier-to-reach mainland destination ... like Beal City.

Compiled from web sites and wire reports by Mr. Flip, who's awaiting an invitation to either event.

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