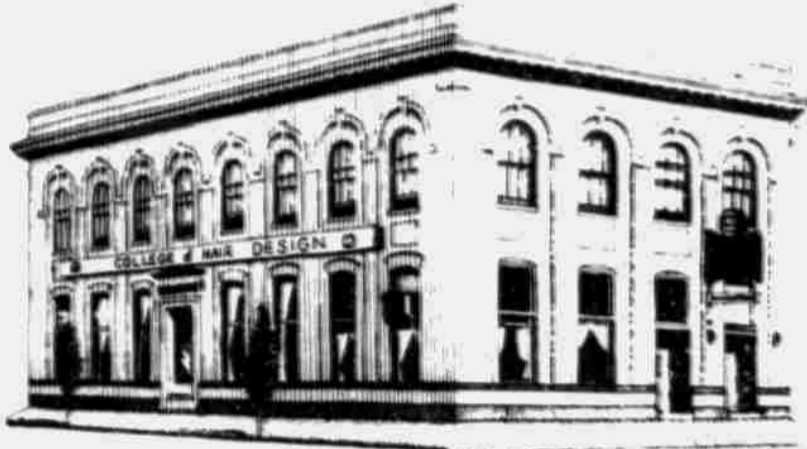


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Only networks may gain from college football battle

This Friday, the College Football Association member schools will decide whether to accept a \$180 million contract offer from NBC television or to abide by the \$263 million contract the NCAA has already signed with CBS and ABC.

The College Football Association is an organization consisting of 61 major colleges, including all of the major conferences except the Big Ten and Pac Ten (which might yet join) and the major independent schools, such as Notre Dame and Florida State.

television money it gets because television networks are willing to show the major football powers on Saturday afternoons. The minor schools that do not belong to the CFA must surely realize that there would be no television contract, and therefore no television money, waiting for them four years from now when the agreements signed this year expire. They also know that the CFA has indicated a willingness to give 8 percent of its television income to the NCAA. That doesn't sound like much, but it is more than the vast majority of schools like Eastern Kentucky and Ball State stand to make on their own.

pat clark

Whatever the vote, we are going to hear that this is a momentous occasion. If the CFA should vote in favor of the NCAA contract, some NCAA executive is going to proclaim that the integrity of intercollegiate athletics has been spared, that the good guys finally won, and that this signals the death knell for the CFA.

If the CFA should vote to accept the NBC offer, the CFA statement on the subject will sound like the Emancipation Proclamation, with assorted babblings to the effect that the big football powers are at last free to pursue gridiron excellence without the burden of dividing the television money with Boise State and Dartmouth. In simultaneous statements the CFA will say that intercollegiate athletics have been saved, and NCAA will say that intercollegiate athletics have been ruined.

All pomposity aside, if intercollegiate athletics have not been ruined already, the formation of the CFA, including the expulsion of CFA schools by the NCAA, will not ruin them. In the first place, I don't believe that the NCAA schools would vote to toss out the CFA members, because to do so would defeat their own purpose. A school like Fresno State gets what little

There are also plenty of administrative and legal headaches that could arise should the NCAA vote to oust the CFA schools. What happens, for example, to the very lucrative football contract between NCAA member USC and CFA member Notre Dame? And if the NCAA and the CFA pursue separate football contracts, which network gets the rights to those games?

Schools such as Marquette and Georgetown, which do not field football teams but which challenge for the NCAA basketball championship every year, also would not like to see the CFA schools leave the NCAA. In short, none of the NCAA schools stand to gain anything from getting rid of the major football powers, and some of them stand to lose a great deal, both in terms of money and prestige.

A decision to split the CFA from the NCAA could also affect the bowl game structure, with the CFA schools possibly even going to a playoff format if bowl game contracts are not available.

If there is a group that should not be concerned about the in-house fighting between the NCAA and the CFA, it is the fans. No matter which contract gets the CFA approval there will be televised football on Saturday afternoons. For that reason, alone, it doesn't matter very much to me what happens to the CFA vote Friday.

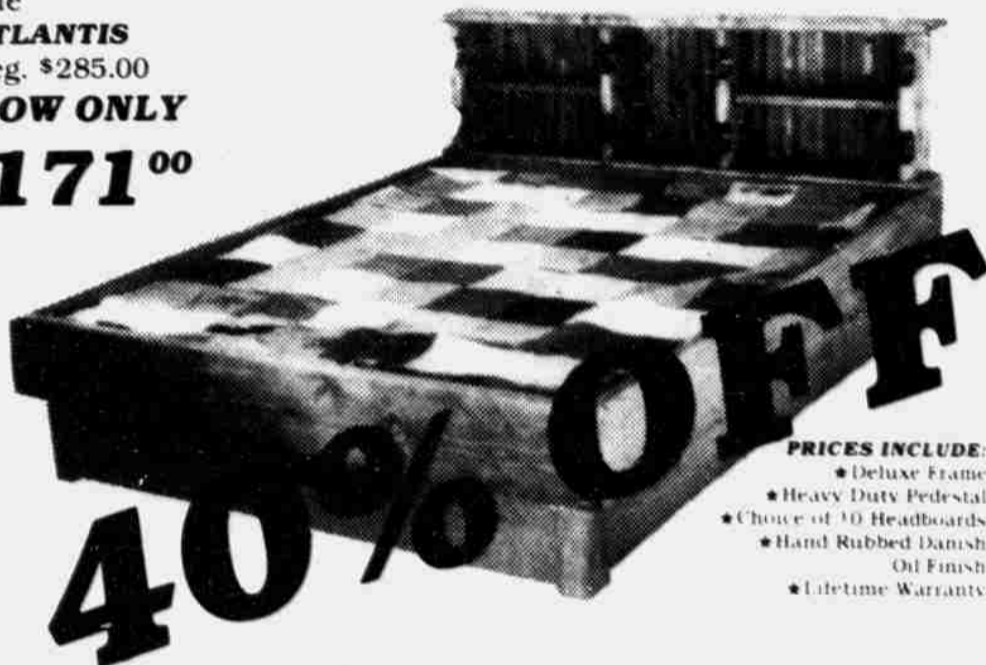
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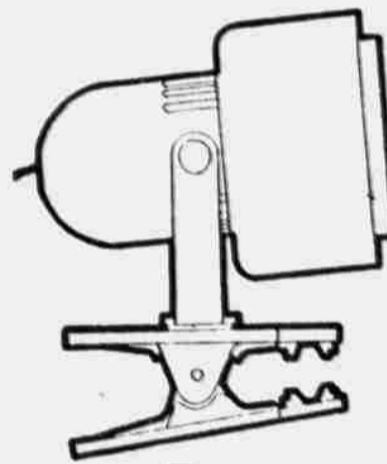
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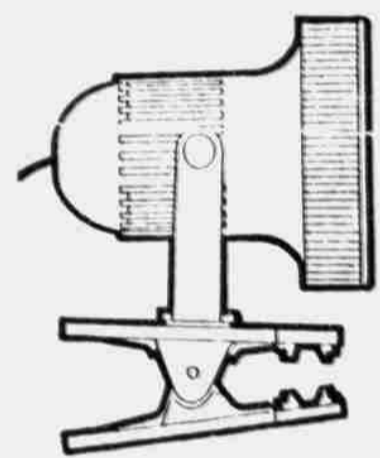
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