

# BOWL NEWS

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## AFA hopes to end losing skid, spike MWC prestige

By Jim Benton, [www.armedforcesbowl.com](http://www.armedforcesbowl.com)

**Fort Worth, Texas, December 30, 2009** - New Year's Eve is generally a time when people enjoy themselves but Air Force football players Peter Lusk and Ben Garland have not had much fun the past two years.

Air Force has lost the past two **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** games, both played on the morning of New Year's Eve, but the Falcons will get a chance to snap its losing streak Thursday morning when they take on Houston at Amon G. Carter Stadium.

"We've had fun during the week but at end of the day, it's a football game and whether you win or lose it's how you feel afterwards," Lusk a 250-pound senior offensive lineman said during Wednesday's pre-game press conference. "I think back to the last two years and after the game, it's New Year's and we all want to go out and have fun but we felt rotten. All we did is sit in the hotel room and get the night over with. We all really want to pull out a win here."

Garland, the Falcons' senior defensive lineman, agreed.

"It's been heartache the past two years," he said. "I don't think anybody is ready to accept that again."

The Falcons have another motivating factor in snapping what is a three-game bowl losing streak if the 2002 San Francisco Bowl is included.

Air Force plays in the Mountain West Conference which has been trying to build its reputation to boost its bid to become a BCS conference.

With wins by Wyoming, BYU and Utah, the MWC is 3-0 so far in bowl games this season with the results of bowl games for the Falcons and TCU still pending.

"I don't think it's anything the players think about much," Lusk said. "We've been following the other teams. We watched the Wyoming game and we were rooting for them. Hats off to Wyoming. They played really well. We watched BYU and Utah. They are our conference teammates but I don't think it puts any type of pressure on us to win.

"We want to win for the team. But, I think it's kind of in the back of our minds you could say to win for the conference. We want to represent the conference well. It's a great conference. A lot of people talk about the big three (TCU, BYU and Utah) but some of the lower teams play pretty tough too. I think that's one thing the national media kind of overlooks. They say our conference really isn't deep enough but if you look all the way through our conference, teams are able to compete."

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Garland says you can't ignore what another win might mean for the MWC.

"It motivates you," he said. "It's in the back of your mind but first is winning the game for the guys next to you. Then definitely there is the side note of winning for the Mountain West Conference because it is one of the top conferences."

Air Force athletic director Hans Mueh takes a different approach and admits an Air Force win would be huge for the MWC.

"It puts a little pressure on us because I think it is important," Mueh said. "I would love for us and TCU to finish the sweep and go 5-0 and win that bowl trophy that they give at the end of the season. But I think we've already proven with the 3-0 start and beating two Pac-10 teams says that we are legit.

"It's time for somebody to say 'come on, let them in.' All Craig Thompson (MWC Commissioner) has ever wanted to do is prove it on the field and we have proven it on the field. There isn't anyone in the country that can't look at the Mountain West Conference and say they shouldn't be legitimate members of the BCS. I don't care how they do that, take away an at-large spot, but this is ridiculous.

"Wyoming's win over Fresno was so huge. This was the fifth team in our bracket and that was pretty impressive. That was a decent Fresno State team. The programs in our conference are all working very hard to improve. "



**Jim Benton** - Jim Benton was a sportswriter for the Rocky Mountain News in Denver for 41 years until the paper folded last February. He started as a high school beat writer four decades ago. Since then, he has covered a variety of sports including college football, basketball and hockey, professional hockey, football, baseball and basketball, tennis, golf, bowling, soccer, horse racing and NASCAR. Benton is a Denver native and a graduate of the University of Denver.