



Volume 39, Issue 2

August 24- September 2, 2024

***Marc's Opening Week Of Winners Is Here!***

# LIGHTS. CAMERA. PLAYBOOK. LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

**88% ATS AWESOME ANGLE INSIDE!**



- *'Betcha Didn't Know' Handicapping Article*
- *Awesome Angle and Tremendous Trends*
- *Incredible Stat of the Week*
- *Analysis on Every NFL and FBS College Game*
- *Best Bets and Key Plays*
- *Full Schedule with Opening Lines*
- *Kenny White's College & NFL Power Ratings*



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## RED-FACED BOWLERS

*A Weekly Insight Into The Art Of Sports Handicapping*

**A**s excited as we are each year with the start of a new college football season, imagine the anxiety running through the players on each team.

It's been a long wait from the end of last season to the start of a new one this year. The anticipation is even greater for those teams who capped off a winning campaign with a season-ending bowl bid... especially those teams who suffered a disappointing bowl performance.

We call these teams "**RED-FACED BOWLERS.**" Simply put, these are teams who were heavily favored to win their bowl game, only to suffer a stunning defeat, exiting stage left.

These **RED-FACED BOWLERS** are eager to make amends for last year's season-ending faux pas, and according to our database, they certainly deliver in season-opening games. In fact, had we chosen to –

**PLAY ON any college football team in its season-opening game if they lost straight-up as a bowl favorite of -7 or more points last season**

– we would have found ourselves in a favorable position at the start of each new season.

These **RED-FACED BOWLERS** have responded impressively, going 51-35-1 ATS in FBS games since 1980 – a solid 59% winning proposition.

This year, no less than four thoroughly embarrassed squads assume this role: **Iowa State, SMU, San Jose State, and Utah.**

Collectively, this group laid 38.5 points in their four bowl games last season, losing outright by an average of eight points per contest. Talk about limping home red-faced, with their tails between their legs.

FYI: Only **SMU** qualifies against an FBS foe this week. And for what it's worth, if these red-faced bowlers won 21 or more of their previous 28 home games, they improve to 30-15-1 ATS, **including 15-0 SU and 13-2 ATS** against foes who won four or fewer games last season.

It's now eight months later, and the Mustangs are ready to shed the weight of their red-faced

embarrassment. If you're wondering whether they're starting the season flustered to the max, you can bet on it!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If you enjoy handicapping articles like this, and the exclusive winning information inside this week's issue, now is the time to secure your weekly Playbook Football Newsletter for the 2024 football season through the Super Bowl. We've **ranked No. 1 in the nation** in win percentage on Best Bets over the past three seasons, going 165-115-4-1 overall, for a **net profit of \$12,310 @ \$100 per star rating**. To subscribe, simply log on to **PlaybookSports.com** or call toll-free for fast, friendly customer service at **1.800.PLAYBOOK** and also get a handful of added bonuses when you do! Remember, one or two extra winners a week is all you need to increase your profits this football season, and you'll do just that with the **Best Football Newsletter on the Planet!**

*Marc Lawrence*

**Next Issue: In-depth writeups and analysis on every lined NFL and FBS College Football game, plus much more! Available Tuesday, September 3 after 8:00 PM ET. Log on at PlaybookSports.com or call 800.752.9266. Do it now!**



**THIS WEEK'S AMAZING SITUATIONAL PLAY**

This team is **39-2** outright in non-conference home openers since 1977. Their opponent checks in at **1-11 SU** in season opening road games since 1980. Who is this week's home-loving host?

**For the Trivia Teaser answer, turn to page 7.**

### AWESOME ANGLE OF THE WEEK

**PLAY ON** any CFB underdog with revenge in its first game of the season facing a foe in its second game of the season if the foe won 10+ games last season.

**Play ON:**  
**BOSTON COLLEGE (Monday, 9/2)**

**ONE FOR  
THE MONEY**

**ATS W-L  
Record S/1980:  
14-2-1  
(88%)**

**View Marc's Awesome Angle Of The Week and more at the PlaybookSports.com website!**

# 2-MINUTE HANDICAP



FOR A COMPLETE 2-MINUTE HANDICAP OF EVERY GAME ON TODAY'S CARD, VISIT [www.PlaybookSports.com](http://www.PlaybookSports.com)

ATS = Against The Spread • A = Away • Con = Conference • D = Dog  
F = Favorite • H = Home • Rev = Revenge • R = Road • SU = Straight-Up

## College Football Games

All results are ATS – Against The Spread – and most recent, unless noted otherwise.  
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### TEAMS KEY FACTS, STATS & ATS TRENDS

**Thursday, August 29**  
N Carolina 5-1 L6 vs Big 10... 5-1 as dogs 6 < pts... 1-3 vs non-conf rev  
MINNESOTA 7-2 in 1st of 3 str HG... 8-3 Weekdays vs non-conf... 1-3 HF's 6 < pts

**Friday, August 30**  
Temple 4-1 as dogs 28 > pts... 4-2 L6 vs SEC... 0-6 Gm One... 1-6 on Weekdays  
OKLAHOMA 10-1 as non-conf favs 35 > pts... 4-2 in 1st of 3 straight HG

W Michigan 0-6 L6 vs Big 10... 1-3 Game One... 3-9 away vs non-conf opp  
WISCONSIN 8-1-1 vs MAC... 4-1 as non-conf favs 21 > pts... 1-3 Gm One home

**Saturday, August 31**  
Clemson 6-1 L7 Neutral site games... 1-3 Game One... 2-5 L7 vs SEC  
GEORGIA SERIES: 6-2 L8... 6-1 Gm One... 4-1 as NC favs 15 < pts... 7-3 L10 vs ACC

Old Dominion 6-1-1 as dogs > 17 pts... 5-2 away bef BB HG... 1-3-1 Game One  
S CAROLINA 5-1 L6 vs Sun Belt... 7-3 as non-conf favs 17 > pts... 1-3 Game One

Penn St SERIES: 5-0 SUATS L5... 3-0 L3 vs Big 12... 5-1 as non-conf RF's > 7 pts  
W VIRGINIA 6-3 Game One... 2-6 L8 vs Big 10... 2-5 L7 as non-conf HD's

Akron 0-7 as dogs 30 > pts... 2-6 L8 vs Big 10... 2-4 in 1st of BB RG  
OHIO ST SERIES: 2-0 L2... 4-0 L4 vs MAC... 1-7 in 1st of 3 str HG... 1-3-1 Gm One

New Mexico SERIES: 6-0 L6... 1-7 as dogs 21 > pts... 1-6 L7 vs Big 12... 3-11 Gm Two  
ARIZONA 3-0 Game One... 1-3 L4 vs MWC... 1-3 as non-conf favs 30 > pts

Miami Fla SERIES: 5-1-1 L7... 11-1 as non-conf RF's < 21 pts... 1-5 away bef BB HG  
FLORIDA 1-7 hm vs ACC... 2-5 Gm One... 2-5 as dogs LY... 3-8 bef unlined gm

Colorado St 6-1 as dogs 28 > pts... 0-5 Gm One... 0-3 L3 vs SEC... 1-4 bef unlined gm  
TEXAS 4-1 Game One... 8-3 home vs non-conf opp... 2-4 L6 vs MWC

W Kentucky SERIES: 2-0 L2... 6-1-1 Gm One... 11-3 as dogs 21 > pts... 2-5 L6 vs SEC  
ALABAMA 3-0 L3 vs Conf USA... 14-2 Game One... 7-1 as non-conf favs 28 > pts

Fresno St 5-0 as dogs > 17 pts... 3-1 Game One... 1-3-1 L5 vs Big 10  
MICHIGAN 6-1 in 1st of 4+ straight HG... 3-1 Game One... 3-8 L11 vs MWC

Notre Dame 5-2 away vs SEC... 5-2 as fav / dog 3 < pts... 1-4 Game One away  
TEXAS A&M SERIES: Host 2-0 SUATS... 6-1-1 Gm One... 10-4-1 hm vs non-conf opp

**Sunday, September 1**  
Lsu 7-1 L8 neutral site gms... 0-4 SUATS Game One... 1-3 L4 vs Big 10  
USC 3-1 L4 vs SEC... 0-6 L6 neutral site gamess... 2-6 Game One

**Monday, September 2**  
Boston Coll 4-1 Gm One vs conf... 12-3 away w/ conf rev... 1-4 as dogs 18 > pts  
FLORIDA ST SERIES: 4-1 L5... 3-7 Game Two... 2-4 as conf favs 14 > pts LY



## SEVENTEEN-UP

One of the most powerful tools in isolating winning plays during the first week of a college football season comes from my Well-Oiled Machine and it zeroes in on experienced teams **who return 17 or more starters from the previous season.**

To show how marvelously successful these experienced squads are, '17 returning starter' underdog FBS are 1600-1385-39 in all games since 1990. That, my friend, is an impressive 53.6% win percentage. Imagine making almost 3,000 wagers and not losing any money. That's pretty powerful. Which means there is money to be found inside those numbers, in the right situations.

Better yet, by playing on any '17 returning starter' underdog in its first game of the season, your win percentage zooms to 57% with a 119-89-5 ATS winning record, going 4-2 ATS overall last season. This week finds **Boston College, FAU, Stanford, and Western Michigan** all joining the fray.

And if these same teams managed to win 4 or more games last season they improve to 68-41 ATS, including **17-7 ATS** as dogs of more than 21 points. The Eagles and the Broncos each check this box this week.

There you have it. Now go out and experience a winning weekend.

## 2024 PRESEASON COLLEGE FOOTBALL AP POLL

First Place votes in parenthesis, followed by total points.

1. Georgia (46) 1,532	14. Clemson 689
2. Ohio State (15) 1,490	15. Tennessee 629
3. Oregon (1) 1,403	16. Oklahoma 566
4. Texas 1,386	17. Okla State 538
5. Alabama 1,260	18. Kansas State 526
6. Ole Miss 1,189	19. Miami FL 492
7. Notre Dame 1,122	20. Texas A&M 292
8. Penn State 1,060	21. Arizona 237
9. Michigan 995	22. Kansas 231
10. Florida State 971	23. USC 172
11. Missouri 927	24. NC State 171
12. Utah 887	25. Iowa 140
13. LSU 804	17 others receiving votes

## INCREDIBLE STAT OF THE WEEK

**Notre Dame is 54-1 outright in its last fifty-five games in which the Fighting Irish outgained their opponent.**

Be sure to read the INCREDIBLE STAT OF THE WEEK each week in the PLAYBOOK Football Newsletter!

### THE WISE GUYS

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# THIS WEEK IN FOOTBALL: AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 2

Remember: You Have A PLAYBOOK BEST BET Whenever Our Predicted Margin Of Victory Is 6 Or More Points In Favor Of Your Line

## Saturday, August 24

### Florida State over Ga Tech by 10 (Dublin, Ireland)

This is FSU's "Kill Bill Vol. 1", "John Wick" and "Death Wish" season rolled into one. The Seminoles playoff snub dominated the post-season headlines, complicated by the embarrassment the Noles suffered at the hands of the other team on a revenge tour this year, Georgia. The 63-3 Orange Bowl blowout video should have been tossed off the Tallahatchie Bridge during spring practice. If you need a college quarterback, D.J. Uiagalelei is available, back in the ACC after a rough ride at Clemson and some R&R at Oregon State. Georgia Tech had visited the Emerald Isle before, beating Boston College in 2016, back when GT threw 2-3 times per game under then-coach Paul Johnson. Brent Key runs the program now, and he led the Ramblin' Wreck to its first winning season in five years. The key to that was QB Haynes King, who directed the offense to a 14-point and 94 yards-per-game improvement. One of the many reasons Ireland is one of the world's wonders is that online sports betting is quite legal, so for our Irish punters out there, remember FSU is 2-5 outright in season openers plus **1-7 ATS** and 4-4 SU vs GT. Tech is 9-3 as a season-opening Irish Setter, and please don't forget double-digit dogs are 13-6 ATS (3-0 last season) in openers when a bowl team last year. Slainte!

### SMU over NEVADA by 35

Traditional ACC power SMU has been known as an offensive laboratory for years and rarely better than under Prof. Rhett Lashlee, whose offense averaged 38 points and 462 YPG in his first two seasons while winning 18 times. These Ponies do something never associated with the program: play defense. Five times last season, SMU held teams to their lowest yardage of the season (Holy Louie Kelcher Batman!). Nevada is...not good. Jeff Choate won at Montana State and spent the last three seasons as a Texas assistant. He inherits a "nowhere to go but up" program that won two games in the previous two seasons. UN is **0-7 SU** and **1-6 ATS** mark in their last seven games as a home dog, while the Mustangs are **6-1 ATS** as a DD favorite under Lashlee, winning by an average of 32 points. SMU is also prominently featured on Page 2 in Marc's **Betcha Didn't Know** column as a **"RED FACED BOWLER."** Don't be a red-faced bettor, and as Tommy James and the Shondells once said in "Mony Mony," ride your pony (to the window).

## Thursday, August 29

### North Carolina over MINNESOTA by 3

Let's play "Jeopardy". The answer is Max Johnson. The question is, "Who will take over at QB for North Carolina this year?" Drake Maye is in New England, while Johnson arrives with a football pedigree and 22 starts at Texas A&M and LSU. Johnson's dad is former Super Bowl-winning QB Brad Johnson, and his uncle is former Georgia and Miami head coach Mark Richt. Mack Brown is not the card you wish to draw early; he boasts a 27-4 SU record and is 20-1 outright against teams that won six or fewer in the previous season. UNC is also **5-1 ATS** as a dog of six or less. Before you row over to your phone to place the bet, remember this is a revenge game for Minnesota, who lost by 18 in Chapel Hill last year. HC PJ Fleck's oars don't hit the water with great speed at the beginning, just 6-5 SU, but they are 7-2 ATS in the first of a three-game homestand. That's enough to water down our enthusiasm for this one.

### Coastal Carolina over JACKSONVILLE STATE by 3

You're probably wondering where former WVU and (although Charles Woodson grabs a Costco-sized bottle of antacids every time someone says it) former Michigan (and Arizona) coach Rich Rodriguez is these days, but it's Jacksonville State. JSU ran the 4th fastest offense in CFB last year, averaging 79.3 plays per game. They nearly lost half the roster to the transfer portal despite a breakthrough nine-win season. Former Furman QB Tyler Huff takes the snaps now, and hopefully, he has the thick skin to endure a RichRod verbal blast. Meanwhile, we're wondering why perennial PLAYBOOK favorite CCU is a slight underdog to a college newbie in its second FBS season. Rodriguez's shaky 9-20-1 ATS record as a chalk dog of six or less is not worth chanting about.

## Friday, August 30

### OKLAHOMA over Temple by 48

Are we really doing this? Seriously? We only hope Temple collects a seven-figure check for this swirly football game. OU is **10-1 ATS** as a non-conference favorite of 35 or more, plus 15-5-1 ATS outright in the last 21 as a favorite, with a **6-1 ATS** non-con mark. The Sooners have won 29 of 32 season openers at home and are riding a 15-0 Norman winning streak. Head Coach Brent Venables named former Gatorade National Player of the Year Jackson Arnold the signal caller as the Sooners make their SEC debut with high expectations. The Temple of Doom? The Owls don't have anything to hoot about, going **0-6 ATS** in Game One and **1-6 ATS** on weekdays. So far, we can't find a day in the week to play this one, so by burying it on a Friday night, the networks probably have done Temple (and perhaps all of us) a favor.

### Tcu over STANFORD by 10

Stanford, another traditional ACC power, has a nasty schedule, with nine of its last ten games against bowl teams. The Cardinal has sunk to profound depths and will likely require plenty of patience to return to "at least decent." Stanford is No. 2 in the nation in returning talent and will be hosting a Horned Frogs team that's No. 39 with 19 starters returning. TCU Head Coach Sonny Dykes picked up the 24th-ranked portal class, including 22 three- or four-star players, but lost offensive coordinator Garrett Riley to Clemson, plus eight players drafted into the NFL. TCU is 3-0 in this series and has reached 30 points each time. Stanford resides in this week's **SMART BOX** as a 17-player returning underdog (see Page 3 for more). However, the Cardinal also found a spot in the **WELL-OILED MACHINE**, which points out Stanford is 4-30 SU and **4-28-1 ATS** (!) in the past three seasons when giving up 30 or more. We will be returning...to our Wordle.

### WISCONSIN over Western Michigan by 20

Stanford has company in the **SMART BOX** on page 3 this week with WMU as a 17-starter returning team that opens the season as an underdog. The Broncos also reside at No. 17 in overall returning production. The Broncos are money-hunting to start the season with both the Badgers and Ohio State on the schedule, and Western's luck versus the bigger conference is predictable: **0-6 ATS** in the last six vs.

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the B1G. Wisconsin has back-to-back 7-6 seasons and nearly missed a 21-year winning season streak, saving themselves with a 2-0 rush to the finish line. Wisky is always rough on the MAC, going **8-1-1 ATS** in the last ten, but Head Coach Luke Fickell is uninspiring at 5-4 ATS. WMU is 3-9 away versus non-con foes but has plenty of experience as a dog of 20 points or more, going 8-5 ATS in recent tilts in that role. The bottom line is we go against the **SMART BOX** as often as Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone loses a 400M hurdles race.

### MICHIGAN STATE over Florida Atlantic by 7

The Owls' glory days of Lane Kiffin have faded into that world of so-so, even with former Houston and Texas boss Tom Herman steering. He has minimal experienced talent returning, ranked 122nd and from a plunging perspective, the Owls are flightless with low ATS and SU numbers that would look great on a golf scorecard but nowhere else. Herman can boast about being **7-1 ATS** in his career as a double-digit dog and being 3-1 outright in season-opening road games, which is a wee bit encouraging – but from the Michigan State perspective, discouraging. The Spartans brought in Oregon State coach Jonathan Smith to replace human train wreck Mel Tucker. We're Smith fans at the PLAYBOOK, loving how he turned the Beavers in the right direction. He faces a season with low overall returning offensive production but No. 19 in defense, so expect close to the vest when Sparty plays, especially early. Smith may be 11-2 SU and 10-3 ATS as a home favorite, but with an offense living the Spartan lifestyle, you might be better off checking on that crypto investment Tom Brady was involved in.

**Saturday, August 31**

### INDIANA over Florida International by 25

Our friend Bill Connolly provides us with our returning player production numbers and some rare, good news for FIU fans: The Panthers are 32nd in the nation in terms of experience. Every deed goes unpunished, though, because Indiana returns 21 starters in Curt Cignetti's Hoosier debut. Cignetti was hugely successful at James Madison, 52-10 in six seasons, while putting a former FCS program into the FBS, where they hit the AP Top 25 in their first year in the FBS, becoming the first team to do so. IU hasn't won an outright Big Ten title since 1945, nor a bowl game since 1991. Given the stronger state of the B1G this year, don't expect any conference title parades in Bloomington, perhaps ever again. FIU's nursing bowl hopes this year after BTB 4-8 campaigns under Mike MacIntyre, but in the season opener, the Panthers are butting heads with not just Indiana but the numbers. Numbers show Cignetti is 25-2 SU in his first five games of the season with the Mad Men and his sterling 14-3 ATS record in lined games. Advice to FIU: deposit the big check quickly and use it to touch up the newly named Pitbull Stadium.

### PITTSBURGH over Kent State by 30

Kent State earned a whopping one-win last year in their never-ending fight with Akron to be the worst in America's Conference – The MAC. The program will put the "gold" in Golden Flashes, hitting the road for Pitt, Tennessee, and Penn State for big "Molly's Game" style cash games. Some of the profits will be needed for training room supplies, thanks to Kent being an equally whopping 1-17 SU and 4-13-1 ATS as a road dog this decade. Pitt is 6-0 SU in this series by an average of 29 points, 27-5 SU vs. the MAC, and 21-5 SU in home openers. Mix that in with the Flashes' unflashy **0-7 SUATS** in season road openers and it adds up to our classic refrain "lay it if you play it."

### MARYLAND over UConn by 24

What a competitive basketball game would be won't be the same on the gridiron. (Shouldn't it be gridgrass?) UConn's miracle 2022 six-win season under Jim Mora, Junior saw only half as many wins last year thanks to terrible offense. The Huskies are 5-25 in their first six games since 2018, so to hopefully facilitate a quicker start, Mora grabbed an offensive coaching savant in Brad Robbins to run the UConn offense. Robbins was a big success in D2 at North Greenville University, averaging 27 PPG against the third-hardest schedule in that world. But the Big Ten is a world away from the Gulf Coast Conference, and Terps' coach Mike Locksley will bring a fierce defense into College Park, MD. This D has seen better numbers in the last four years, and while Maryland lost some key OLs, the Terps have been to three straight bowls and are 18-2 outright in season openers. We shall apply John Cena's "Attitude Adjustment" finisher by telling you the Terrapins are 31-11 ATS in SU wins as the favorite.

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### UTSA over Kennesaw State by 28

Welcome to FBS football, Kennesaw! The baby Owls aren't even teenagers yet; they are just a ten-year-old program moving up from FCS. The coaching staff crushed recruiting season, grabbing a surprising number of three and even four-star recruits, but success likely won't start against the Roadrunners. Coach Jeff "Tractor" Traylor's squad went 7-1 down the stretch last year, including a first bowl win. That 'W' capped off 32 wins in a three-year stretch in San Antonio, including 23-3 in the Alamodome, the third-best in FBS since 2020. Our PLAYBOOK Football Preview Guide reminds you that UTSA is 19-0 SU and 13-4-1 ATS in games where they win the turnover battle under Traylor. All signs point to 24-3 in the Dome. Take a stroll by the Riverwalk's "dirty creek," grab some celebratory churros, and watch this one Charles Barkley style.

### GEORGIA over Clemson by 10

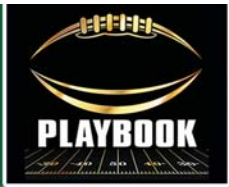
Georgia took its screwing over by the CFP Committee quietly and then took out their frustrations on undermanned Florida State in a 60-point victory in a plain old Orange Bowl. Georgia is once again nearly everyone's pre-season Number One. The AP #1's are 33-0 SU and 19-8-1 ATS in season openers. 31 of those victories have been by 16 points or more, including **10-2 ATS** if they won 13 or more games the previous season. Georgia is 3-6 ATS in this series, and the Fighting Dabo's are **12-1 ATS** as underdogs of five or greater, plus 6-1\$ in neutral site games. However, the neutral site might be generous given the distance between Atlanta and Athens. Another thread to consider is the dog in this series has barked 12 of the last 16 times. There's absolutely no doubt that Heisman candidate Carson Beck will quarterback the Bulldogs to a high playoff spot, but there is some doubt about the original number. This isn't a shorthanded Seminoles team this week, but a Clemson team that may be overlooked in the Dawgs' gigantic orbit. It's hard to imagine any Dabo Sweeney team being overlooked, and that's not smart. (Sorry, Kirby).

### Eastern Michigan over UMASS by 8

What sort of mess have we gotten ourselves into here? We'll tell you what. The Minutemen are 6-46 outright in the past five seasons. However, they registered half of those wins last season, including two against FBS opponents who won 16 games in 2023. So, the question is whether or not Paul Revere's descendants are ready to ring the victory bell and return to a bowl game for only the third time in school history – 1972 and 1964, when they beat UC Davis in the Boardwalk Bowl and fell to East Carolina in the Tangerine Bowl – or since Jehovah become a witness. It's an important game for both schools and UMass to return to the MAC next season. Despite dropping the last three contests in this soon-to-be-renewed

*(continued on next page)*

# 2024 Weekly PLAYBOOK MIDWEEK ALERT



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## THE MIDWEEK BEST BETS

College Football 11/12

**MARSHALL**  
over Appalachian St by 10

**W**hen perusing the statistics on these teams this season you'll notice the Herd with a decided 53 YPG edge on defense. It's because Marshall has held each of its last three foes to season-low yards, including a 12-0 blank job at Old Dominion last week. It certainly doesn't hurt knowing the Herd is 14-3 outright in games after tossing a shutout. Also note the fact that the Apps have lost three conference games this season for the first time since 2013. With Marshall a super sturdy 66-16 SU at home versus sub-.600 FBS foes, and the Mountaineers 1-5 ATS away of late against winning foes, remember where you "herd" this – in the MIDWEEK!

College Football 11/12

**WASHINGTON**  
over Oregon by 6

**A** quick glance at the Huskies' body of work this season shows a team that is 8-1 ITS, winning its games by an average +139 net YPG. Teams with numbers like this always make for an attractive dog, especially when catching two TDs. It should also be noted they are taking points for the first time under head coach Kalen DeBoer. With Oregon staring dead ahead to a same-season double revenge against Utah, including a loss in the Pac-12 title game, we'll do more than take a glance at this live dog – we'll wrap our arms around them.

Pro Football 11/13

**ARIZONA**  
over Los Angeles Rams by 7

**Z**ona head coach Kliff Kingsbury holds all the cards in this matchup. For openers, his troops are a 4 x 4 division road dog – meaning they rush the football for better than 4 yards per carry while the Rams surrender more than 4 yards per rush. Triple averaging dogs in this role are especially effective during the second half of the season when both teams are coming off a loss, going 9-1-1 ATS overall since 2000. Toss in Kingsbury's 5-0 SUATS career road dog log when coming off a double-digit loss and we only see more woes ahead for the defending Super Bowl champs.



## THE MIDWEEK CONTENDERS



College: NAVY, UCLA  
NFL: DENVER BRONCOS

All plays contained in the MIDWEEK ALERT are suggested selections from the weekly PLAYBOOK football newsletter. You can download the MIDWEEK ALERT online at PlaybookSports.com anytime after 12:00 hours ET every Thursday.

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series, the Minutemen are **5-0 ATS** against the EMUs. Speaking of five, however, the Eagles have landed in a bowl game in the last five non-Covid years. Head coach Chris Creighton is short on returning production (No. 117 overall) but loves the long and winding road where his troops have gone 39-20-1 ATS overall as a visitor in his ten seasons in Ypsilanti, including **33-13 ATS** the past eight seasons. In Creighton, we trust.

### SYRACUSE over Ohio U by 11

This is what we know for sure: New Syracuse head coach Fran Brown was a good coach and incredible recruiter for Georgia (named #1 national recruiter by 247Sports), but will his recruiting acumen translate to upstate New York? The path to his journey was cleared when the Orange finally signed divorce papers with 8-year head coach Dino Babers after an abysmal 20-45 mark in conference games under his lead. We must give Babers his due, though, as after going 1-17 ITS (In The Stats) in conference games from 2019-2020, Syracuse was 11-7 ITS in the same games the past three seasons. Even more promising, the Orange ranked No. 16 overall in Bill Connelly's returning production numbers, with nine returning starters back on offense. Furthermore, Babers had them cranked up early on in the season as they went 11-1 SU and 7-2-1 ATS. In the meantime, OU 4th-year head coach Tim Albin has taken his troops to bowl games the past two seasons but resides on the opposite end of the return production rankings at No. 127 overall with only nine starters back. But we must warn – you don't come off consecutive 10-win seasons like the Bobcats and suddenly become irrelevant. Caveat Emptor, y'all.

### GEORGIA TECH over Georgia State by 13

The classic case of the red-headed stepchild taking on Big Brother kicks the season off in Atlanta today when Tech tackles State in a battle of Georgia. The Yellow Jackets snapped a four-year losing slide with a 7-win effort last season despite allowing more yards than they gained while also surrendering 400-plus yards for the sixth straight season. These are not the stats that one confidently lays 21 points with. Worse, the Rambin' Wreck is a prohibitive favorite in a Game Two versus Game One situation – See Troy and Florida State in games previewed later for more on this non-desirable state of affairs.

Panthers first-year head coach Dell McGee is a Georgia native with 22 years of coaching experience, including back-to-back national titles as the running game coordinator and running backs coach for the Georgia Bulldogs. He helped recruit and develop Georgia's 56 NFL draft picks from 2017-23, including 15 first-rounders and an NFL-record 25 players drafted over the last two years. The Panthers are in good hands with McGee.

### SOUTH CAROLINA over Old Dominion by 14

If you think the five-win Gamecocks were down last season, think again. Following a 2-6 start to the '23 season, South Carolina closed the campaign on a positive 3-1 winning note. Meanwhile, four of their seven losses came against teams that finished the season ranked in the Associated Press Top 20. Quarterback LaNorris Sellers, the heir apparent to Spencer Rattler in garnet and black, is a physical freak of an athlete (6'3" and 240 pounds... 4.4 in the 40-yard dash) with a cannon for an arm. While we figure them to play with plenty of passion this season, the problem today is they have conference tilts with Kentucky and LSU on deck, meaning they are not likely to show their full arsenal against the middling Monarchs today – meanwhile, five of ODU's seven losses last season where of the one-score variety. We realize the Old Guys are **0-3-1 ATS** all-time away in season openers since joining the FBS, but they are also on a current 9-2 ATS overall ATS win skein. Sure, a bounceback by Shane Beamer's bunch appears in order this season. But we're in no hurry to lay this kind of wood with a team that is 3-7 ATS in home openers as a favorite of 15 or more points. We're taking it if we're playing it.

### James Madison over CHARLOTTE by 14

The Dukes have lit it up since becoming an FBS team two seasons ago, going 19-5 SU and 14-8 ATS. Many say it was due to opponents taking them lightly, but that's not true. Their 8.5 season win total is tied for the most in the Sun Belt Conference. Only they will have to do it with a new head coach, Bob Chesney, who brings 14 years of head coaching experience ranging from Division I FCS to Division III, winning seven conference championships with a career record of 111-46 (.707). In other words, he comes from the same makeup as James Madison, who arrived as an FBS team in 2022. He'll need to muster all

of his skill this season, though, as the Dukes return only eight starters – four on each side of the ball. The host 49ers arrive off a pair of identical 3-9 seasons, and with it, second-year head coach Biff Poggi is fighting to stave off a team nickname change to the “3-and-9ers.” A significant part of the reason for the 3-9 effort last season was that Charlotte ranked dead last in the nation in third-down conversion percentage (.237). That won’t work here, not against a team with a 9-2 SU and 8-3 ATS record as a visitor in its FBS history – no Niners for us.

#### 4★ BEST BET

##### WEST VIRGINIA over Penn State by 1

Many people, including us, are high on West Virginia after spring ball, and its fair considering the Mountaineers just finished 9-4 last season, snapping a four-year losing skein. They bring back QB Garrett Greene, who has played in 22 career games with two starts, and it looks like Neal Brown is finally off the hot seat. WVU brings back a lot, but Greene’s emergence was one of the major storylines in 2023, and he’s sparked a newfound excitement about WVU football that’s been missing in the Neal Brown era. As a result, this team will be a Big 12 contender, and to top it off, WVU is the No. 12 ranked school in the nation in offensive returning production. On the flip side, the Nittany Lions laid a 38-15 whipping on the Mountaineers, a bludgeoning in which a coach who owns a 12-6-2 ATS career mark in games as a double-digit dog can return the favor. His counterpart, PSU coach James Franklin, stands 2-2 SUATS in season-opening road games, with the two wins by six and four points. With it, we welcome **THE CLINCHER: West Virginia is 19-1 outright in its last twenty home openers.**

##### Boise State over GA SOUTHERN by 6

The Broncos travel south looking to shake an Andy Avalos curse where they look to win a road opener for the first time in four years since his arrival in 2021. Enter Spencer Danielson, a former Boise State defensive coordinator whose philosophy is that incoming players are not paid. You have got to love it. Danielson has revealed that incoming freshmen to the Broncos football team will have to earn any NIL money they want to make in their first year. “When we recruit freshmen, no NIL or collective [money] is promised to anybody,” he said. “They’re promised a chance to compete.” We wonder what will happen next when the NCAA allows teams to pay players. Still, the message is there – Danielson is all business. The Broncos’ former DC took the reins down the stretch last year, leading the wild horses to a 3-1 finish, and returns 11 starters on defense. Third-year Panthers’ head coach Clay Helton has guided this GSU team to bowl games each of the past two seasons despite finishing with 6-7 records each year. Nevertheless, Georgia State brings a lofty **8-0 ATS** record at home in non-conference games since becoming an FBS team in 2014. There are many plusses on both sides, meaning a double-digit host plus the points becomes the side.

##### KENTUCKY over Southern Miss by 34

While, according to the Vegas oddsmakers, this appears to look like a one-sided affair, it’s because it is. The visiting Golden Eagles lost their luster behind the recently revised 127th-ranked offense in the returning production rankings. As a result, head coach Will Hall hit the transfer portal as hard as his checkbook would allow while focusing on young, talented players from Power Four programs, including former Florida State QB Tate Rodemaker. The loss, however, of star RB Frank Gore Jr. (over 4,000 rushing yards and recently named the MVP of the 2024 East-West Shrine game) cuts deep. Toss in head coach Will Hall’s tepid 0-8 SU and 2-6 ATS career mark as a dog of 17-plus points, and you can see where we’re going here. Then there is Kentucky head coach Mark Stoops and his fondness for rubbing out outclassed non-conference opposition – 18 straight wins as a favorite, and 19-1 outright and 13-7 ATS at home. Remember, Kentucky started more freshmen two years ago than any team in the nation. They are all eligible to vote now.

##### OHIO STATE over Akron by 48

After freezing like a baby bird falling out of its nest during a winter storm, Ryan Day realized he needed to shake things up in Columbus this offseason. After consecutive 11-0 starts that resulted in disappointing 11-2 seasons, and despite losing quarterback Kyle



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McCord to the portal, the Buckeyes went on the offensive, snagging veteran signal-caller Will Howard from Kansas State to stabilize the position. Alongside two-time SEC leading rusher Quinshon Judkins from Ole Miss, it was part of Ryan Day’s makeover following last season’s disappointing 0-2 finish—after a promising 11-0 start. New OC Chip Kelly swapped the sun of Southern California for the, well, less sunny beaches of Columbus, Ohio. He noted that NIL (Name, Image, Likeness) benefits trump good weather. Kelly is now reunited with Day, one of his former players at the University of New Hampshire. So where does that leave the shoeless Akronites? In deep s - - t today. At 4-52 overall in FBS games since 2018, the Rubbermakers are already waiting for the season to end. As a 50-point underdog today, expect the Buckeyes to put them out of their misery starting today. This **WARNING BULLETIN:** 50-plus point favorites in FBS games are just 6-14 ATS since 1986.

##### ARIZONA over New Mexico by 36

Yet another season-opening matchup that looks as though it belongs on an SEC schedule in late November finds the barefoot Lobos playing their second game of the campaign against first-timer Arizona, only this time with the look of a new head coach in Bronco Mendenhall on the New Mexico sidelines. Surprisingly, the Lobos doubled their win total from two to four last season, improving their offense by 175 net YPG despite leading the nation in TOs. However, four wins didn’t satisfy the UNM regents. Mendenhall brings 20 years of head coaching experience from BYU and Virginia, boasting a combined record of 135-81 and 14 bowl appearances. Notably, over 60 of his players have landed NFL contracts since 2005. The Lobos will need patience, as he was just 8-16 in Year One at both BYU and Virginia, and this year’s returning production is paper thin. The Wildcats were purged in the Pac-12 blowup and now reside in the Big 12 conference behind first-year head coach Brent Brennan. On the heels of a 10-win season last year, Arizona matched its previous win total from the previous four years combined. Its improvement was so dramatic that they went 6-0 against .400-plus opponents in 2023 after just 1-17 versus the same ilk the previous two seasons. While this looks like a lot of wood to chop for such an upstart team last season, we want no part of the hobo Lobos.

##### ARIZONA STATE over Wyoming by 10

Another newbie in the Big 12 this season, the Sun Devils program is in a state of disarray entering this season. Not only is ASU riding a pair of 3-9 seasons the past two years, but they also lost the player they thought would be their future leader, as four-star quarterback Jaden Rashada announced his transfer to Georgia. Amidst all this strife, the nail in the coffin is that Arizona State will be under NCAA sanctions for recruiting violations. However, they did score with the nation’s 28th-ranked Transfer Portal. It’s a starting point for second-  
(continued on next page)

year head coach Kenny Dillingham, whose troops will take on no less than ten foes who went bowling last season. Ugh. The promising news today, though, is they'll do so knowing they reside inside the **TRIVIA TEASER** on page 2. Meanwhile, new Wyoming head coach Jay Sawvel was its former defensive coordinator. He'll have big shoes to fill as the Cowboys made it to three consecutive bowl games last season for the first time in school history. At just 1-12 SU in Big 12 battles since 1997, we don't see Sawvel's maiden voyage in the desert living up to expectations tonight.

## UPSET GAME OF THE WEEK UPSET

### FLORIDA over Miami Fla by 11

Promises. Promises. They've been pouring out of Miami since the Hurricanes hired Mario Cristobal as their head coach two seasons ago. Following a disappointing year in 2021 under Manny Diaz, the program was forced to change directions. Cristobal, a Miami native, was a popular choice after putting Florida International on the FBS map during his tenure with the Panthers from 2007-12 before being fired "going backward" with an 8-14 record in his last two seasons at FIU. After serving as Alabama's lead recruiter for four years, he resurfaced as a head coach at Oregon before the call came from Miami. Unfortunately, after a series of coaching guffaws, he carries today's label of a top recruiter and a lousy coach. Cristobal brought in the top quarterback in the offseason transfer portal, Cam Ward, who has 13,874 yards and 119 touchdowns in his career. So, while the portal has been a welcome helper after Cristobal's continued faux pas on the sidelines, he's under the gun while pulling down over \$8M a season in Miami. On the other side of the field roams another coach on the hot seat where Billy Napier has yet to produce a winning season in two years with the Gators. With it, Florida has now suffered losing seasons three consecutive years for the first time since 1945-47. Napier's chance at redemption starts here, with his 4-1 SUATS career as a home dog and **11-2 SUATS** as a dog of fewer than five points in his career. With the Gators ranked No. 21 overall in Bill Connelly's final returning production ratings, we're all in with the hosts in the Swamp today. Especially with an added push from **THE CLINCHER: Florida is 41-1-2 SU in home openers since 1980, including 37-0-1 against non-conference opponents.**

### NEBRASKA over Utep by 35

If there's been one word that can describe Nebraska football fans of late, it is 'patient.' However, after six consecutive losing seasons, the folks in Lincoln were fired up to welcome new head coach Matt Rhule in 2023. Rhule managed to post the most wins since 2019 but still finished with another losing record at 5-7. So, Huskers' Nation must have been greatly disappointed, right? Apparently not. It seems that most Nebraska fans are ready to run through a wall for Rhule after Brett McMurphy of Action Sports reported Rhule, saying, "There was a time when Nebraska football was feared. We're not at that point yet. We need to take back the respect it is to play Nebraska. We want our fans, opponents, and all of college football to respect us.... taking back – and bringing back respect – to Nebraska football." Okay, where's the wall? Thanks to a defense that improved 128 yards last season, Nebbish continued its small upward climb in the victory column (5,4,3), which goes hand-in-hand with Rhule's career road map. In Year One at Temple, he won two games. At Baylor, it was one. In Year Two at Temple, he won six games. At Baylor, it was seven. Then, in Year Three at Temple, he won 10 games. At Baylor, it was 11. That tallies to 8-28 SU in the first joint seasons and 44-23 SU and 41-22 ATS after that with the same schools. If nothing else, you gotta love the school cheer song at Austin Peay – for real – "Let's Go Peay." New head coach Scotty Walden was brought in from Austin Peay to replace Dana Dimel, so now in El Paso, they'll be shouting, "Let's go U-T-E-Peay!". Well, that's about all our human interest material on the woeful Miners, the FBS team with the longest bowl drought since 1967. Of course, Walden inherited a bare cupboard, but he brought along 12 APSU transfers – including ten on offense. Call them the UTEP Governors, for now, or call them dead meat today, should you choose. We're calling on the 23rd-ranked team in the land in returning player production this season to bury the Miners in a blowout win. Huskers!

### NORTHWESTERN over Miami (OH) by 1

Welcome to 2024 Northwestern football. With Ryan Field under renovations until 2026, the Wildcats will be playing in a makeshift "home" this season, splitting home games between the Lanny and Sharon Lakeside Family facility in Evanston and Soldier Field in Chicago. The Lakeside venue plays host this afternoon to a pair of teams who won 20 games between them last year. Northwestern recently completed one of college football's biggest turnarounds, going from an awful 1-11 effort in 2022 to a 9-4 mark last season when head coach David Braun debuted for the Purple Cats. Most impressive, though, was NU's 10-2 ATS record when they won three of their final four games outright as an underdog. While Braun is just in his sophomore season, Miami head coach Chuck Martin is heading into his eleventh year at Oxford. Martin, perhaps CFB's most under-the-radar head coach, brings an interesting perspective into this contest. Over five years from 2014-2018, Miami was 5-20 in one-score games. They've since worked their way back to respectability in such games, going 14-10. And speaking of long-term, 25-year-old QB Brett Gabbert is back for his sixth season in Oxford, having played in and started 38 games, going 23-15, with 7,714 passing yards with 59 TDs and 18 INTs. After a 6-1 start last season, he suffered a season-ending leg injury in a Week 8 game against Toledo. Behind the nation's 44th-ranked unit in return production, the RedHawks are the team to beat in the MAC this year. And with Northwestern's home-field advantage somewhat weakened to start the campaign, we'll side with a Miami squad that stands a respectable 5-3 ATS in Big Ten battles under Martin.

### HOUSTON over Unlv by 6

After paying the big bucks for Dana Holgorsen to leave Morgantown for Houston in 2019, Cougar fans were not smiling after two seasons yielded a 7-13 record. Then came 2021, and it all came together. Houston caught the world napping and won 12 of their last 13 games after dropping the season opener to Texas Tech. Houston Cougars football was back! Well, maybe not. Houston's 4-8 debut in its first-ever season as a member of the Big 12 last year sent Holgorsen packing, replaced this year by Mr. Dependable, Willie Fritz. It's a big step up for Fritz, who coached for two seasons at Georgia Southern before spending the next eight years at Tulane. However, a solid transfer portal came in, too, and with it Willie's 7-2 ATS log in season openers, including a **4-0 ATS** ledger at home by an average win margin of over 20 PPG, looks to come into play today. Facing Fritz this evening is Barry Odom, whose first season with UNLV in 2023 saw the Runnin' Rebs break on through for a 9-win bowl effort – despite dropping their final three games! So, the question begs: what can they do for an encore in 2024? How about adding to a frosty **12-0 ATS** away mark in non-conference contests for openers. In fact, the feeling here is you can toss Houie's recent 1-7 ATS mark as home chalk out the window with Fritz Witz in town. A not-so-cool **1-4 SUATS** career mark for Odom against Big 12 opposition melts away any eagerness to hop on his back this week. The line has moved from Houston -3 to -1.5, so the value lies with the Cougars.

### SOUTH ALABAMA over North Texas by 3

It was a battle between two programs that got hammered in the offseason. The Mean Green turned lean in Eric Morris' first season in Denton last year when they snapped a three-year bowl skein behind a 5-7 effort. They also took a big hit in the transfer portal not long after that, losing QB Chandler Rogers, RB Ayo Adeyi, WR Ja'Mon Maclin, and a total of 25 players. Sheesh... it's one reason they rank No. 104 in overall returning player production. Like North Texas, USA was hit hard with significant losses, including head coach Kane Wommack, who left the program to become the DC at Alabama after leading the Jaguars to bowl games each of the past two years. New boss Major Applewhite returns to the head coaching ranks behind the nation's 127th-ranked team in Bill Connelly's revised returning production numbers. The good news for Morris is that his offense finished second in the country last season with 79.1 plays per game. The bad news is the bulk of the players responsible for that stat are gone. There's not much to go on here, but we know for sure that the Jags are 1-4 ATS at home of late on Saturdays, and the Mean guys are 7-0-1 ATS in their last eight appearances on the sixth day of the week – for whatever it matters. Pick your poison.

### TROY over Nevada by 11

Though Nevada had its ups and downs under former head coach Jay Norvell (33-26 in five seasons), the arrival of Ken Wilson in 2022 turned out to be comparable to the seven-headed beasts announcing the

apocalypse in the Book of Revelation. Yes, the last two seasons were that bad for the Wolf Pack, who posted just four wins in Wilson's brief two-year tenure. Enter new head coach Jeff Choate, faced with a full-scale rebuild in 2024 after Reno could manage only a No. 126 ranking in recruiting before the new season. Troy head coach Jon Sumrall also proved to be just a two-year stand in Troy, but the Trojans won 23 games overall, including back-to-back Sun Belt championships. Sumrall is off to Tulane, and in his stead is Gerard Parker in his first head coaching role, with coaching stops at Notre Dame, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Parker puts a 20-3 SU mark in home openers on the line today, which fits right in with Nevada's 6-26 outright record in road openers. The problem is we're more concerned with the point spread, and Parker inherits a threadbare team that ranks No. 131 in overall returning production. The bottom line is we can't lay almost two touchdowns with such a vast lack of experience on both the coaching and player personnel sides for Troy. You make the call.

### Virginia Tech over VANDERBILT by 14

We remember when Virginia Tech, under Frank Beamer, was one of the nation's most feared college football teams. Not so much these days. From 2020 through 2022, the Hokies were mired in mediocrity, going 14-21 overall. However, following a 3-8 disaster in coach Brent Pry's debut season 2022, the Hokies appear to be trending in the right direction. They enter critical Year Three under coach Pry after winning five of their final seven games in 2023; a red-hot run also included a 5-2 ATS effort and resulted in the program's first winning season in four years. Not much has changed for the Vanderbilt football team in Nashville. The Commodores won their first games for the second straight campaign, but last year, they came up short in their remaining ten contests. Still, despite a 9-27 overall record, head coach Clark Lea is back with Vandy for a fourth year. And despite needing a 3.83 GPA to transfer to VU, the school ranked 37th in this year's transfer portal, higher than LSU, Michigan, and Notre Dame... if only they could play up to the same level. The invading Hokies dress up as the No. 4 overall team in the nation in return production, including No. 2 on offense... and half of their losses came by one score last season. Breakout QB Kyron Drones keys an offense with all 11 starters back, so this team figures to be in the ACC hunt in 2024. Vandy, however, is doomed to see its current 5-1 SU mark in the first two games of the season over the past three years banished to the FirstBank Stadium gutters. Even so, the two-touchdown spread makes a play on either side too close to call.

### RICE over Sam Houston by 7

It was a bitter pill that 8-year Sam Houston head coach K.C. Keeler was forced to swallow last year. The one-time FCS champion Bearkats won the FCS national title in the modified 2020 season and was unbeaten before losing in the playoffs in 2021 while going an astounding 21-1 in 2021's two FCS seasons (spring and fall). But a nightmarish 0-8 start in their debut in the FBS in the 2023 season occurred when they scored just ten total points in their first three contests. However, the good news for Keeler's crew was a refuse-to-fold 3-1 record down the stretch. This season's better news is a well-stocked roster, including ten starters returning on offense. Remember, Keeler was 85-27 with the team heading into last season. We're expecting a big bounce back in 2024. The bounce back is what every Rice fan hopes for since the Owls' most recent winning season came back in 2014. The last time the Owls enjoyed the luxury of this many returning starters (18), they proceeded to win four games in 2021. They did, however, cut a swath to a second consecutive bowl game last year despite sporting season-ending records of 5-8 and 6-7. Mike Bloomgren's Hooters won't face a team with a winning

record last season until mid-October, so the chances of landing a third straight bowl bid are heavily in their favor. What isn't is a wobbly 7-10 SU and 5-11-1 ATS record as a favorite the past eight seasons, though Bloomgren's 25-26-1 ATS mark at Rice hasn't sent Owls fans to the poorhouse. That puts us on the sidelines today, as we'll likely start giving a hoot about the Owls down the road.

### TEXAS over Colorado State by 32

Let's tell it like it is. Next to Georgia, the most popular public team this season is Texas. Before drinking the Kool-Aid, though, you need to know the profoundly talented Longhorns were pillaged in the 2024 NFL draft when 11 players heard their names called. Only Michigan lost more (13). Alas, Hook 'Em was forced to poach good talent from the Transfer Portal, hauling down the nation's fifth-best class, including four all-huge targets for quarterback Quinn Ewers to work with in the school's SEC debut. However, Ewers will need to stay on his 'A' game after young phenom quarterback Arch Manning put on a show in Texas' spring game, throwing for a show-stealing 355 yards and three touchdowns. Our biggest concern today, however, is a massive look ahead to Michigan next week, meaning the Horns are not likely to show all of their cards in this contest. Then again, they may not have to, considering the Rams have never beaten a ranked opponent, going **0-25 all-time**. Still, Jay Norvell's offense did double its scoring output while gaining more than 100 yards per game than in his first season in Fort Collins last year. This year's best news is that star graduate senior WR Tony Horton spurned the NFL (and the transfer portal) to return to Fort Collins and could be the most talented player in the MWC. Taking the points is the only clear option we see here.

### Ucla over HAWAII by 8

With a game against Delaware State under their belt, the Grass Skirts look appealing in more ways than one here tonight. For openers, they bring a sharp 14-6 ATS mark in the last twenty games when taking points on the island, including **6-1 ATS** as a dog of more than ten points. Can we get an 'Aloha' from someone? They are also 10-3 ATS as a home dog when coming off a non-conference clash, and 17 starters from a team that closed 3-1 down the stretch last season return for third-year head coach Timmy Chang. Surprisingly, the Bruins set foot on Waikiki Beach for the first time since they opened the season in 1976 when they edged the Warriors, 10-7. It won't be business as usual for UCLA, though. Not only are the Bruins moving to the Big 10, but head coach Chip Kelly is also gone after six seasons, now an assistant with Ohio State. Deshaun Foster takes the reins here but will show up with an albatross around his neck in the form of UCLA's **1-10 ATS** record as non-conference chalk of fewer than 18 points. With the California boys in a transition state while eyeing up their Big Ten opener next week, they become automatic fade material here. Like we said in the 2024 PLAYBOOK Football Preview Guide, expect reality to bite the Bruins this season harder than a Midwestern winter.

### ALABAMA over Western Kentucky by 34

Now that former head coach Nick Saban has said enough is enough with the new wild, wild west – known as the transfer portal – it's Kalen DeBoer time in Tuscaloosa. So, how does one approach taking over at Alabama after Saban went 206-29 on the field with 16 victories in 23 bowl game appearances, ten SEC West titles, nine SEC championships, and six national championships? "I think there's always areas and ways where you can take what the foundation is and continue to add to it in your own way," DeBoer said. "Putting a staff around me that will have everyone pulling in the same direction is key." We'll get our first look tonight when the Tide hosts Western Kentucky, one of only four FBS teams to have won and covered their last three bowl games each of the previous three seasons. Thus, it's no surprise the Hilltoppers bring solid numbers of their own into this fray, going 6-1-1 ATS in Game One and 11-3 ATS as dogs of 21 or more points. However, a straight-up comparison between these two programs is like comparing 'Plan 9 From Outer Space' to the first 'Star Wars' film. While Bama stands **3-0 ATS** in its last three games versus Conference USA opponents, WKU has struggled to a 2-5-1 ATS effort in its last eight battles with the SEC. Wait, it gets worse. The Crimson Tide is also **14-2 ATS** in Game One, **7-1 ATS** as non-conference favorites of 28 or more points, and **9-2 ATS** in the first of back-to-back home games... and we didn't even mention DeBoer's **9-1 SU and 7-1 ATS** career mark in regular season non-conference

(continued on next page)

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	CFB Reg Season	26-16-2	+3796
	CFB Bowls	5-4	+ 750
2021	NFL Reg Season	26-18	+3772
	NFL Playoffs	3-2	+ 664
	CFB Reg Season	26-16-2	+1438
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capers! Factor in the **0-6 ATS** failure of Hilltoppers' sixth-year head coach Tyson Helton as a dog of more than 9 points, and there are too many good numbers (and athletes) to overlook. Despite huge expectations, the Tide rolls anyway.

### MICHIGAN over Fresno State by 16

Has there ever been a defending national champion football team that counted the seconds to a new season more than the 2024 Michigan Wolverines? Sports media have battered the champs from pillar to post since head coach Jim Harbaugh exited Ann Arbor for Los Angeles in late January. Cheating allegations, a new 4-year "show cause" penalty levied on Harbaugh by the NCAA, a new head coach and coaching staff, and the replacement of 20 players who contributed for three or more seasons have all combined to surround the program with a worrisome negativity. In fact, Michigan comes in at No. 9 in the just-released preseason AP college football poll – the lowest-ranked defending national champions since 2011 – so you know the players can't wait to shut the critics up. However, it's one thing to silence the naysayers, but it's another thing to cover a 21-point spread against a Fresno State team that's gone 29-11 the last three seasons, including a trio of bowl wins. The Bulldogs don't arrive unscathed, though: Head coach Jeff Tedford stepped down for the second time in five seasons due to health reasons in July. The new skipper is new head coach Tom Skipper, who directed Fresno to a 37-10 bowl win over New Mexico State last season. Fortunately for Skipper, his team's sidelines are bolstered by five full-time Bulldog alumni coaches, and the team welcomes back eight starters on offense, half of whom fortify the offensive line. Despite coming off its first 15-0 season in school history, Michigan and new head coach Sherrone Moore have many questions to answer in 2024, and opening the season with five consecutive contests at the Big House should help them ease through the transition. But right out of the gate, the Wolverines must overcome a 4-10 ATS skid as non-conference chalk of more than 17 pts and a disappointing 3-8 ATS mark versus Mountain West opponents – while the Bulldogs arrive with a perfect **5-0 ATS** record as dogs in that price range. The Well-Oiled Machine reports that while teams who won a national championship the previous season are 26-16 ATS in season openers, they're also just 96-114-1 ATS as non-conference chalk. The bottom line is this is a boatload of points to be laying with a Michigan squad that's under immense pressure to get off to an impressive start.

### TEXAS A&M over Notre Dame by 6

While many major college football programs are jumping to new conferences this season, the Irish continue to ignore the siren call of conference membership and remain steadfastly independent. That stance might hurt them this year as Notre Dame is ineligible to get a first-round bye in the expanded CFB playoff. Since the top four seeds in the 12-team playoff go to conference champions, the Irish can only get a spot as an at-large team, and the highest seed Notre Dame can be is No. 5. Third-year head coach Marcus Freeman should inform his troops that the Irish reside in this issue's **INCREDIBLE STAT OF THE WEEK** on page 3, as they are **54-1 outright** in their last fifty-five games in which they outgain an opponent, meaning every possession counts in this contest. Of course, for that record to improve, the Dame must outgain the Aggies in total yardage tonight. And, given that A&M is **20-0 ITS** (In The Stats) in its last twenty home games, suddenly 54-1 is not a lock. We weren't surprised to see this line run from the Irish as a slight favorite to the Aggies -2.5 since QB transfer Riley Leonard will be making his first start for the Shamrocks. Nine returning starters on both sides of the ball for Tammy brings them in as the No. 38 overall team in the nation in overall returning production, and new head coach Mike Elko was a prize catch who knocked it out of the park when he got in front of the transfer portal after joining the Aggies, reeling in the 4th-ranked portal class. It also doesn't hurt that new strength coach Tommy Moffitt has been on three teams that have won national championships, including Joe Burrow and the 2019 LSU Tigers. Texas A&M has a history of opening strong, going **11-0 SU** in home openers and **8-1 SU** and **6-1-1 ATS** in Game One, but don't risk the farm on them as few of those victims were comparable to tonight's foe. And since the line now favors the Aggies, Notre Dame takes the field with an impressive **7-1 ATS** skein as a dog in season openers. The difference could be the location: Kyle Field is one of the most challenging venues in the nation, and with the series host currently 2-0 SUATS, we'll give the nod to Elko in his A&M debut.

**Sunday, September 1**

**3★ BEST BET**

**UsC over Lsu by 6**

What better spot to settle a beef between AP preseason-ranked football factories than in Sin City, where these two teams battle for the first time in 40 years? No. 13 LSU wrapped up a 10-3 record last season with a 35-31 bowl win over Wisconsin, while No. 23 USC lost five of its last seven games to finish 2023 with an 8-5 record, though the Trojans did thrash Louisville 42-28 in their bowl meeting as 5-point dogs. Tigers' head coach Brian Kelly has gone 20-7 since landing in Baton Rouge in 2022, and he owns a solid 7-1 SU and 5-2-1 ATS record in the last eight games versus Big Ten foes (yes, USC is somehow a Big Ten team... it just doesn't sound right, but it is what it is). History, however, does not side with the striped Cats, as they have gone 0-4 SUATS in Game One and **0-4 SUATS** as non-conference chalk of fewer than 15 points. In the interest of full disclosure, the Trojans have stunk it up lately in regular season neutral site games, going 0-6 ATS, but they're also 3-1 ATS as a dog in season-opening games. The key here, though, is USC head coach Riley is a Hot Rod Lincoln as an underdog, going **6-1 ATS** in his career when taking more than three points, including **4-0 ATS** during the regular season. Remember, Riley went 55-10 during his stint at Oklahoma, so the pressure to get the Trojans back to a double-digit win season in 2024 will be more substantial than one of those funnel clouds in 'Twisters.' This will also be the first of 11 games this campaign in which Southern Cal will tackle a team that played in a bowl game last season. For the last word, we hand it off to **THE CLINCHER: Lincoln Riley is 38-4 SU in the first six games of the season, including 12-0 with USC.**

**Monday, September 2**

**5★ BEST BET**

**FLORIDA STATE over Boston College by 8**

Obviously, we can't make a move until we have a chance to grade the Noles' battle in Dublin against Georgia Tech, but regardless, we're not interested in laying three TDs with a team that traveled 8,000 round trip miles just a week ago. And if you think favorites playing their second game of the season hold an advantage over those in their first game, then think again: These teams are a long term 84-105-5 ATS since 1980. As for the visitors, they arrive in a bad news-good news situation. The bad news is that former head coach Jeff Hafley and three defense coaches jumped ship and took off for the frozen tundra of Green Bay in the NFL. However, the good news is VERY good. First-year head coach Bill O'Brien, who took over the Penn State program on the heels of Joe Paterno's firing, takes the reins. In his two years with the Nittany Lions, O'Brien and Penn State went 15-9 SUATS while he won both Big Ten and National Coach of the Year honors. That sound you're hearing is another **SMART BOX** 17 Returning Starter dog knocking on the door. Even better, Boston College has a significant revenge chip on its shoulder from a 31-29 home loss last season – a game in which the Eagles outgained the Seminoles 434-340. Anything remotely resembling that performance should improve their 4-1 ATS mark in Game One versus a conference opponent, 3-1 ATS record in this series, and 12-3 ATS log when playing on the road with ACC revenge. Considering the Seminoles' lethargic 3-7 ATS slide in Game Two and 2-5 ATS mark when playing on Weekdays, we'll seal the deal with **THE CLINCHER: See Marc's AWESOME ANGLE of the Week on page 2.**

**NOTE:** Home team is shown in ALL CAPS. PLAYBOOK selection is **Underlined and Bold**. Should we pass or not have a strong opinion on a game, neither team will be bolded.

# KENNY WHITE'S 2024 FOOTBALL POWER RATINGS

Power Ratings courtesy of KennyWhiteSports.com

Rnk: Overall rank nationally (130 teams) • PWR: Numerical team power rating • HF: Numerical home field value

Rnk	School	Conference	PWR	HF	Rnk	School	Conference	PWR	HF	Rnk	School	Conference	PWR	HF
NCAA														
96	Air Force	Mountain West	98	4.5	21	Kansas	Big 12	116.5	3.5	49	Rutgers	Big Ten	108	4
133	Akron	Mid-American	86	2	23	Kansas St	Big 12	116	5	117	Sam Houston St	Conference USA	93.5	3.5
6	Alabama	Southeastern	124.5	6	132	Kennesaw St	Conference USA	87	2.5	102	San Diego St	Mountain West	97	4.5
57	Appalachian St	Sun Belt	107	4	129	Kent St	Mid-American	88.5	4.5	126	San Jose St	Mountain West	89.5	3
25	Arizona	Big-12	115.5	4.5	29	Kentucky	Southeastern	114.5	4	15	SMU	Atlantic Coast	118.5	4
77	Arizona St	Big-12	102	4	40	Liberty	Conference USA	111	4	105	South Alabama	Sun Belt	96.5	2.5
63	Arkansas	Southeastern	106	4.5	74	Louisiana	Sun Belt	103	3.5	42	South Carolina	Southeastern	110.5	5
86	Arkansas St	Sun Belt	100	3.5	122	Louisiana Tech	Conference USA	91.5	3	106	Southern Miss	Sun Belt	96	4
113	Army	American Athletic	94.5	3.5	25	Louisville	Atlantic Coast	115.5	4.5	92	Stanford	Atlantic Coast	98.5	4.5
38	Auburn	Southeastern	111.5	5	10	LSU	Southeastern	121	5.5	44	Syracuse	Atlantic Coast	109.5	4.5
131	Ball St	Mid-American	88	2.5	119	Marshall	Sun Belt	93	4	43	TCU	Big 12	110	5
40	Baylor	Big 12	111	4.5	68	Maryland	Big Ten	105.5	4.5	129	Temple	American Athletic	88.5	2.5
38	Boise St	Mountain West	111.5	5	32	Memphis	American Athletic	113.5	3	17	Tennessee	Southeastern	117.5	5.5
70	Boston College	Atlantic Coast	104.5	4.5	11	Miami (FL)	Atlantic Coast	120	4	4	Texas	Southeastern	127	5
90	Bowling Green	Mid-American	99.5	2	63	Miami (OH)	Mid-American	106	2.5	14	Texas A&M	Southeastern	119	6
123	Buffalo	Mid-American	90	3	8	Michigan	Big Ten	123	5	51	Texas St	Sun Belt	107.5	3
71	BYU	Big 12	104	5	59	Michigan St	Big Ten	106.5	5	46	Texas Tech	Big 12	108.5	5
44	California	Atlantic Coast	109.5	4	109	Middle Tenn St	Conference USA	95.5	3	86	Toledo	Mid-American	100	3.5
114	C Michigan	Mid-American	94	2.5	51	Minnesota	Big Ten	107.5	4.5	102	Troy	Sun Belt	97	4
102	Charlotte	American Athletic	97	2.5	77	Mississippi St	Southeastern	102	5	63	Tulane	American Athletic	106	2.5
63	Cincinnati	Big 12	106	5	15	Missouri	Southeastern	118.5	4.5	114	Tulsa	American Athletic	94	4
13	Clemson	Atlantic Coast	119.5	5.5	106	Navy	American Athletic	96	4	96	UAB	American Athletic	98	4
101	Coastal Carolina	Sun Belt	97.5	3.5	32	NC State	Atlantic Coast	113.5	4.5	36	UCF	Big 12	112	4
36	Colorado	Big 12	112	4.5	46	Nebraska	Big Ten	108.5	5	57	UCLA	Big Ten	107	3.5
81	Colorado St	Mountain West	101	4.5	123	Nevada	Mountain West	90	4.5	109	UConn	Independent	95.5	3
77	Duke	Atlantic Coast	102	3.5	120	New Mexico	Mountain West	92.5	2	134	UL-Monroe	Sun Belt	85	2.5
96	East Carolina	American Athletic	98	4	126	New Mexico St	Conference USA	89.5	2	128	UMass	Independent	89	2.5
114	E Michigan	Mid-American	94	2	35	North Carolina	Atlantic Coast	112.5	4.5	51	UNLV	Mountain West	107.5	2
28	Florida	Southeastern	115	5	86	North Texas	American Athletic	100	3	29	USC	Big Ten	114.5	4
109	Florida Atlantic	American Athletic	95.5	3	81	No Illinois	Mid-American	101	4	73	USF	American Athletic	103.5	3
123	Florida Int'l	Conference USA	90	2.5	77	Northwestern	Big Ten	102	3.5	17	Utah	Big 12	117.5	4.5
9	Florida St	American Athletic	121.5	5	11	Notre Dame	Independent	120	5	83	Utah St	Mountain West	100.5	4
59	Fresno St	Mountain West	106.5	4.5	3	Ohio State	Big Ten	128.5	6	121	UTEP	Conference USA	92	3
1	Georgia	Southeastern	129.5	6	112	Ohio U	Mid-American	95	3.5	51	UTSA	American Athletic	107.5	3
96	Geo Southern	Sun Belt	98	2.5	17	Oklahoma	Southeastern	117.5	5	83	Vanderbilt	Southeastern	100.5	4
117	Georgia St	Sun Belt	93.5	2	17	Oklahoma St	Big 12	117.5	5	51	Virginia	Atlantic Coast	107.5	4.5
49	Georgia Tech	Atlantic Coast	108	4.5	96	Old Dominion	Sun Belt	98	2.5	21	Virginia Tech	Atlantic Coast	116.5	5
106	Hawaii	Mountain West	96	5.5	77	Ole Miss	Southeastern	102	3.5	69	Wake Forest	Atlantic Coast	105	4.5
59	Houston	Big 12	106.5	4.5	1	Oregon	Big Ten	129	5	59	Washington	Big Ten	106.5	4.5
51	Illinois	Big Ten	107.5	4.5	74	Oregon St	Pac-12	103	5	83	Washington St	Pac-12	100.5	4.5
46	Indiana	Big Ten	108.5	4.5	5	Penn St	Big Ten	125	5	34	West Virginia	Big 12	113	5
25	Iowa	Big Ten	115.5	5	71	Pitt	Atlantic Coast	104	4.5	86	W Kentucky	Conference USA	100	4.5
23	Iowa St	Big 12	116	5	63	Purdue	Big Ten	106	4.5	92	W Michigan	Mid-American	98.5	3.5
92	Jacksonville St	Conference USA	98.5	4.5	91	Rice	American Athletic	99	2.5	29	Wisconsin	Big Ten	114.5	5.5
76	James Madison	Sun Belt	102.5	2.5						92	Wyoming	Mountain West	98.5	4.5

Rnk: Overall rank in NFL • PWR: Numerical team power rating • HF: Numerical home field value

Rnk	Team	Conf/Div	PWR	HF	Rnk	Team	Conf/Div	PWR	HF	Rnk	Team	Conf/Div	PWR	HF
NFL														
25	Arizona Cardinals	NFC West	97	2.5	7	Houston Texans	AFC South	103.5	2.5	30	Minnesota Vikings	NFC North	94.5	1.5
14	Atlanta Falcons	NFC South	101	2.5	21	Indianapolis Colts	AFC South	99.5	2	25	New England Pats	AFC East	97	1.5
5	Baltimore Ravens	AFC North	105.5	3.5	18	Jacksonville Jaguars	AFC South	100	1.5	22	New Orleans Saints	NFC South	98.5	2
14	Buffalo Bills	AFC East	101	3	2	Kansas City Chiefs	AFC West	108	2	27	N.Y. Giants	NFC East	96.5	1.5
31	Carolina Panthers	NFC South	94	1.5	24	Las Vegas Raiders	AFC West	98	2.5	6	N.Y. Jets	AFC East	104	2
18	Chicago Bears	NFC North	100	2.5	11	L.A. Chargers	AFC West	102	1.5	4	Philadelphia Eagles	NFC East	106	1.5
8	Cincinnati Bengals	AFC North	102.5	2	22	L.A. Rams	NFC West	98.5	2	11	Pittsburgh Steelers	AFC North	102	1.5
8	Cleveland Browns	AFC North	102.5	2.5	11	Miami Dolphins	AFC East	102	2.5	1	San Francisco 49ers	NFC West	111	1.5
8	Dallas Cowboys	NFC East	102.5	3						14	Seattle Seahawks	NFC West	101	1.5
32	Denver Broncos	AFC West	92.5	2.5						18	Tampa Bay Bucs	NFC South	100	2
3	Detroit Lions	NFC North	107	2.5						28	Tennessee Titans	AFC South	96	2
4	Green Bay Packers	NFC North	101	2.5						28	Wash Commanders	NFC East	96	1.5

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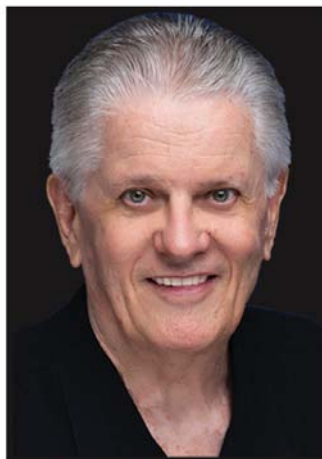
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A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT  
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FOR WEEK ENDING MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2024	3★ BEST BET	4★ BEST BET	5★ BEST BET
2024 COLLEGE FOOTBALL:	USC	WEST VIRGINIA	BOSTON COLL
UPSET GAME OF THE WEEK:	FLORIDA	SUBSCRIBE TO PLAYBOOK TODAY: 800.752.9266	

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## 2024 COLLEGE FOOTBALL - WEEK ONE

Listed next to the games below are two entries: OL is the opening line on the contest and PB is the PLAYBOOK margin.  
You have a PLAYBOOK Recommendation whenever our predicted margin of victory is 6 or more points off the opening line. Remember, opening lines are subject to change during the week so always check YOUR CURRENT LINE against the PLAYBOOK line to determine a final play.

All times listed are Eastern Standard Time (Red type indicates time change) • Games in Official International Rotation sequence • Dates & times subject to change

OL PB				OL PB				OL PB				OL PB			
SATURDAY, AUGUST 24				SATURDAY, AUGUST 31				SATURDAY, AUGUST 31				SATURDAY, AUGUST 31			
305	FLORIDA ST	12:00 PM (Dublin, Ireland)	GA TECH	ESPNU	13'	10		151	FLORIDA INT'L	3:30 PM	INDIANA	B10	18'	25	
306								152							
307	SMU	8:00 PM	NEVADA	CBSSN	22	35		153	KENT ST	12:00 PM	PITT	ESPNU	23	30	
308								154							
THURSDAY, AUGUST 29				THURSDAY, AUGUST 29				155	UCONN	12:00 PM	MARYLAND	FS1	24'	24	
141	NORTH CAROLINA	8:00 PM			3			157	KENNESAW ST	3:30 PM	UTSA	ESPN+	20	28	
142	MINNESOTA	FOX	1'					158							
143	COASTAL CARO	8:00 PM			3			159	CLEMSON	12:00 PM	GEORGIA	ABC	13	10	
144	JAX STATE	CBSSN	5					160							
FRIDAY, AUGUST 30				FRIDAY, AUGUST 30				161	E MICHIGAN	3:30 PM	UMASS	ESPN+	1		
145	TEMPLE							163	OHIO	3:30 PM	SYRACUSE	ACCN	16	11	
146	OKLAHOMA	ESPN	39'	48				164							
147	TCU	10:30 PM			10'	10		165	GEORGIA ST	8:00 PM	GA TECH	ACCN	20'	13	
148	STANFORD	ESPN						166							
149	W MICHIGAN	9:00 PM						167	OLD DOMINION	4:15 PM	S CAROLINA	SEC	17	14	
150	WISCONSIN	B10	23	20				168							
177	FLA ATLANTIC	7:00 PM						169	JAMES MADISON	8:00 PM	CHARLOTTE	ESPNU	10	14	
178	MICHIGAN ST	B10	11	7				170							
								171	PENN ST	12:00 PM	W VIRGINIA	FOX	1		
								172							
								173	BOISE ST	4:00 PM	GA SOUTHERN	ESPNU	10'	6	
								174							
								175	SOUTHERN MISS	7:45 PM	KENTUCKY	SEC	25	34	
								176							
								179	AKRON	3:30 PM	OHIO ST	CBS	50'	48	
								180							
								181	NEW MEXICO	10:30 PM	ARIZONA	ESPN	31'	36	
								182							
								183	WYOMING	10:30 PM	ARIZONA ST	FS1	7	10	
								184							
								185	MIAMI FLORIDA	3:30 PM	FLORIDA	ABC	3		
								186							
								187	COLORADO ST	3:30 PM	TEXAS	ESPN	36'	32	
								188							
								189	UTEP	3:30 PM	NEBRASKA	ESPN	28	35	
								190							
								191	MIAMI OHIO	3:30 PM	N'WESTERN	B10	3'	1	
								192							
								193	UNLV	7:00 PM	HOUSTON	FS1	3	6	
								194							
								195	NORTH TEXAS	5:00 PM	S ALABAMA	ESPN+	6'	3	
								196							
								197	NEVADA	7:00 PM	TROY	ESPN+	15'	11	
								198							
								SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1							
								199	VIRGINIA TECH	12:00 PM	VANDERBILT	ESPN	13'	14	
								200							
								201	SAM HOUSTON	7:00 PM	RICE	ESPN+	12'	7	
								202							
								203	UCLA	7:30 PM	HAWAII	CBS	17	8	
								204							
								205	W KENTUCKY	7:00 PM	ALABAMA	ESPN	32'	34	
								206							
								207	FRESNO ST	7:30 PM	MICHIGAN	NBC	20	16	
								208							
								209	NOTRE DAME	7:30 PM	TEXAS A&M	ABC	1'	6	
								210							
								MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2							
								217	LSU	7:30 PM (Las Vegas, NV)	USC	ABC	6'		
								218							
								219	BOSTON COLLEGE	7:30 PM	FLORIDA ST	ESPN	21	8	
								220							
								The weekly PLAYBOOK Football Newsletter is available for download every Tuesday after 8:00 PM ET at PlaybookSports.com							

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