

August 2, 2007

I noticed how you think the University of Memphis will have a turnaround season, as well as to go from double digit losses to double digit wins not only in your publication but I heard you on ESPN radio make the same comment or something similar. My question is, in your bowl predictions Memphis is not listed as going to a bowl. With all of the CUSA ties with bowls, how could Memphis with 10 wins as you projected be left out of a bowl game?

Derek,

Check out page 16 of the magazine. I have them going to the GMAC bowl and facing Western Michigan. I originally had them playing in the Liberty bowl as I feel they could have the same or better record as Southern Mississippi which has to play Boise St and Tennessee on the road in non-conference play and the Liberty Bowl is in their home town. Memphis does have to play SMiss at "the Rock" so an East title is unlikely and the CUSA offices assured me the CUSA CHAMP goes to the Liberty Bowl regardless of record or a situation like that.

*Thanks for writing and for listening on ESPN,
Phil Steele*

What magazine has a lot of information on the NEC conference or all 1AA teams?

Sherri,

I am almost positive that my Pac 10 preview has the most comprehensive information on any of the 1AA or FCS schools. We give a quarter page on each team jam-packed with information just like my regular magazine and also have complete stats for each conference, the last 3 years standings and a forecast page. Overall we have 35 pages packed with coverage. If you see another magazine with more coverage, let me know but I do not think any exists.

*Thanks for writing,
Phil*

What's your take on Notre Dame this year? How will they do?

*Thanks,
Scott Stubbs*

I did a radio show with Hank Brown who is in his 50th year of broadcasting. Hank is a huge Notre Dame fan and he said that he talked to Notre Dame's offensive coordinator who told him that they showed very little in the spring game and that they would surprise a lot of folks this year.

Notre Dame does have excellent talent but they are also a young team this year with a very difficult opening schedule. It is tough for a young QB and Oline to do well on the road early in the year. The Irish have just 9 returning starters and only return 30 of 58 (52%) lettermen. Only 3 teams this year fall into a category of having 60.5% or less lettermen returning and a starter lost at QB and teams in that category have a weaker record 74% of the time.

ND's schedule is built for a slow start. They have to face an excellent GT team out of the box and then have road trips to Penn St and Michigan the next two weeks. They also have road trips to Purdue and UCLA and home games vs Boston College and USC. Their one "easy" opponent in the first 8 weeks is Mich St and MSU has won 4 in a row in South Bend! I would be surprised if the Irish win more than 4 of their first 8 but the young team plays a more

manageable schedule down the stretch and they should win their last 4 and I have them going to the Gator Bowl to face Miami Florida.

Where are the Vols? Missouri, Alabama, A&M and Oregon are all ranked ahead of Tennessee? That's a stretch...Jeff

Jeff,

Tennessee has to play teams like California, Florida and Alabama on the road while also battling South Carolina and Georgia at home so I do expect a 3 or 4 loss season for the Vols as they have just 11 returning starters and have 26 lettermen lost. I have Missouri favored in 11 of their 12 games, and the other 3 you mention all came up higher in my win projections for the year than the Vols. I do have Tennessee #25 and they take on the 18th toughest schedule in the country. I feel the team that wins the SEC East will have TWO SEC losses this year as it is the toughest division in college football as I mentioned in an earlier Weekly Notes column [CLICK HERE](#)

Thanks for writing
Phil

Hey Phil,

Do you think the Big Ten should add another school? If so, who should join?
Elias

Elias,

NO. I am very much a traditionalist and would not want to see Ohio St and Michigan split up into different divisions and have them not meet which is what happened to Oklahoma & Nebraska. The balance of power in the Big Ten would be uneven if both were in the same division. The Big Ten is better off NOT having a conference title game which gives them a better shot at the national title game. I could go on and on but my answer is NO.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

Alabama just received a verbal from Tallahassee receiver Melvin Ray. Rivals has him listed as a 4 star and one of the nation's best deep threats. His speed is listed as 4.65 and he caught only 9 td's and 500 yards last year. Is he worthy a 4 star ranking?

I would love to be able to follow high school football as closely as I do the college and NFL games. Unfortunately there are only so many hours in the day. I like you rely on recruiting sources to compile my high school rankings. We subscribe to all the recruiting services and I then break down each service's grades on a scale of 1 to 100 for each player. We add up the total points and that is how the PS # is arrived upon. I have not seen Melvin Ray in person so I could not really comment on him at this point but I do respect Rivals and what they have to say about the high school players.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

So how long before you have to start backtracking for picking Florida so low in your top 25? By the way, great picks for Florida in the 2006 season as well. Really...top-notch. What's even funnier is that you have 3 teams in front of Florida who are more than likely going to get beat by them when the season starts. So, let me be one of the first to say it this season that these picks look pretty bad. What works best...the Magic 8 ball or simple coin flip? Thanks!
Francis

Francis,

The Gators certainly were dominating in the Title Game holding Ohio St to under 100 yards and it was their most impressive game of the year. The Gators were fortunate in some other games last year like vs Tennessee when the Vols had a defensive TD wiped out by a questionable penalty or they would have led 24-7. Florida also blocked a FG on the last play to survive vs South Carolina. In all they had 5 close wins last year. I am very proud to have the most accurate magazine last year, over the last 3 years, 5 years and 8 years as well. I will also admit when I am wrong and I did not have last year's national champ in my preseason top 10 because they did have to face Tennessee, Auburn, Florida St on the road and also faced Georgia at a neutral site. Congratulations to the Gators and even though we did not place a friendly wager on the outcome of Florida's season last year I will wear my Florida Gators shirt to work this Saturday in your honor. This year I do expect Florida to lose at LSU and South Carolina and possibly vs Georgia which is my pick for the SEC East title. I could make a great case for any of the top 4 teams in the East winning the title but remember in 2005 I picked the Dogs and no other magazine had them higher than 3rd and they not only won the East they won the SEC title overall.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

Phil,

Since you do not have Tennessee in your top 20 where do you rank them? In your magazine you note that they have a chance to exceed 9 wins. You also have Alabama & South Carolina in your top 20 so I assume you believe they will exceed double digit victories this year placing them ahead of Tennessee?

*Just wondering...
Christopher Hemme*

Christopher,

I have Tennessee at #25 this year. Check out the question above for a little more detail.
Thanks for writing,
Phil

Is there a more anticipated game than the 2008 Alabama/LSU game when Knapsack Nick (my nickname in honor of Larry Brown) travels to Baton Rouge? James Revere

James,

Nationally I can think of a few matchups that might be between higher ranked teams during the season but I know if LSU fans had to pick the MOST important game on this year's schedule the Bama game would be it. I do think the winner of this year's game will win the SEC West this year!

Thanks for writing,
Phil

Phil,

There doesn't seem to be any consensus on what people are voting for when rankings are put together. I don't have a problem with preseason polls, other than the fact that no poll out there has any standards set, meaning they don't say if you should be voting on who you think the best teams are, who would win head-to-head, or who has the best chance of making it to the title game given schedule strength/conference. So, if you can't tell me why polls don't tell voters to rank teams based on a consistent methodology, at least tell me how you came up with your rankings.

Thanks,

Will

Will,

You are correct about the polls not having any specific standard set. I believe they come out ranked mostly by records and then by strength of schedule. You could see a team like Boise St go 11-1 vs a light schedule ranked ahead of a team like Texas A&M which could finish 7-4 having to face teams like Miami Florida, Texas Tech, Nebraska, Missouri and Oklahoma on the road as well as Texas at home. The bottom line is I feel Texas A&M would win a game between the two teams at a neutral site. I have two sets of rankings in my magazine. The Power Poll on page 315 shows that I have Texas A&M at #12 and Boise St at #44 showing I think the Aggies would win in a neutral site meeting. My Top 40 in the front of the magazine reflects the schedule and I only have the Aggies #20 there due to the tough schedule.

I hope this clears things up.

Phil

Dear Phil, I have bought the College Football magazine every year for at least 20 years. One of your best predictions was Arizona State in the 1987 Rose Bowl. I am a Wisconsin fan and believe you are selling them short this year. Eighteen of their players are in your top player lists and several of their units are ranked by you as well. They have had outstanding seasons with far less talent, is it possible you are overemphasizing their tough Big Ten schedule?

Sincerely, Ken Thaler, Costa Mesa, Ca.

PS. I remember when the magazine was on newsprint and had a recap of each game from the previous season.

Ken,

I REALLY appreciate you being a long time reader! Last year I overemphasized Florida's tough schedule and did not rank them in the top 10 and got burnt by it as they won the title. It is very possible that I have underestimated Wisconsin this year but I will stand by my picks and I have Ohio St, Penn St and Michigan all finishing ahead of them in the Big Ten this year and they have to play both Ohio St and Penn St on the road and Michigan at home. This is the best Badgers team in 4 years and they have the best record in the Big Ten the last 3 years so it is a scary pick but one I stand by.

Thank you once again for being a LONG time reader!

Phil

*Today I bought your book "College Football Preview 2007" and I have some questions. For each team you wrote the returning starters. For some teams you wrote a little * beside the number. For example: Michigan Wolverines offense: 6*. I want to know what the * means. I want also want to know in the last 5 bowl games section you have: year, bowl/team rank, line etc. What's the "line". Thanks for your help and have nice college football season.*

Jonathan,

The * next to the offensive starters returning indicates that the QB is one of the starters that is back. If a team's offensive starters returning number does NOT have a * next to it then their QB was lost. The line in the last 5 years bowl matchups shows who was the favorite and who was the dog. This gives you an idea as to whether the team was expected to win or expected to lose the bowl. A team with a -10 was a big favorite in the game and a team with a +10 line was a big underdog.

Thanks for writing

Phil

In your article it said you checked out the new bowl tab?? Not very close, the Texas Bowl tab has several errors not to mention the teams that played last year as well as Reliant Stadium being built in 1972? May want to give that a look before you tell us you "checked" it out!!

*Fan of your weekly rag!! Great Info!!
Ross*

Ross,

The day you sent this we corrected it on the site. Thank you for bringing it to my attention and please let me know if you come upon any other typos on the site.

Thanks a bunch

Phil

Phil,

I love your magazine! Year in and year out, you are the one who has the most credibility when it comes to preseason reviews. I am an avid Gamecock fan and I love SEC football as much as anything in this world! Do you think the Gamecocks have a good shot at winning the SEC East this season? We have a lot of young talent but with 17 starters back, this could be the best team we have had in 20 years!

*Thanks!
Vic*

Vic,

I am very high on South Carolina's chances this year and they are probably the most talented team in the SEC East this season. When I was doing the writeup on SC this year, every time I would do a position I would think to myself "There is my pick for the SEC East". They have 10 starters back from a defense that allowed just 18.7 ppg and that 2006 unit only had 5 starters back. They have my #15 Dline and #2 set of LB's in the country. They also have an experienced QB and some guy named Spurrier calling the shots on offense. They do have to play Georgia, LSU, Tennessee and Arkansas on the road but are very capable of winning the SEC East (as are Georgia, Florida and Tennessee). Spurrier did have a stretch of 5 straight SEC road wins so they are a bona fide contender in the toughest division in all of college football.

Thanks for writing
Phil

