

JULY 19th

I really enjoy the depth of your magazine and wanted to let you know about a powerhouse junior college on the west coast. City College of San Francisco has coach George Rush who has been there over 30 years and they are always one of the top JC programs in the country. They have sent many athletes to DI programs. Larry Grant of Ohio State this year, Maurice Purify of Nebraska, and Desmond Bishop of Cal last year. I am originally from that area but live in Nevada now, but I wanted to let you know that Bishop has a younger brother that plays linebacker and he should be one of the top prospects at his position. Street and Smith has them at #4.

*Thanks,
David Clemons*

David,

Thanks for the email. This year we have expanded our coverage of FCS (IAA) football and should there be enough interest in it we could expand it further next year. If that is the case we may start covering the top JC programs in the country as well.

Thanks for the note,
Phil

Phil and Friends -

Your magazine is unparalleled in terms of the detailed information it provides and the cutting-edge statistical analysis. The passion that oozes from your magazine invigorates my college football hunger each summer. Keep up the exemplary work.

I was, however, in need of clarification regarding an abbreviation. In the "Conference Unit Rankings" box in the bottom right corner of each conference statistics page what is the abbreviation "CH"? I can only speculate (coaching?) on what it represents. What is it?

*Thanks,
Max
Orlando, FL.*

Max,

You are right on the money as it is coaches. We will make sure that in next year's magazine we include that in the abbreviation box.

Thanks for the kind comments,
Phil

*No question, just wanted to say your insights are pretty awesome. Keep up the good work.
Jim*

Jim,

Thanks for the kind comments!
Phil

Hi Phil!

Purchased your preseason magazine as I do every year and noticed your mention of my son, John Hafferty (K-State) quitting on 4/15. I realize most linemen don't get much press and not sure if you were aware, so I just wanted to let you know that John transferred to West Virginia to continue his football career after receiving his scholarship release in March.

*Thank you for your time!
Adrienne Hafferty*

Adrienne,

Thank you very much for purchasing the magazine. I also want to thank you for the update

on John and I look forward to watching him play at West Virginia in the years to come. The Mountaineers will likely be returning all 5 starters up front but John is capable of grabbing a starting spot. For those that are unfamiliar with John, he was PS#166 and has 13 career starts at OG and my last records indicate that he benches 513 lbs!

Thanks for the update,
Phil

*Did TCU make a mistake by moving to the Mountain West Conference? Should they have stayed in CUSA?
Forrest Aven*

Forrest,

The Frogs won the MWC Title in 2005 and finished 2nd in the league last year. As someone who followed the old SWC it was fun to see them competing against Texas schools like Houston and SMU who used to be SWC foes. Most years I do rate the MWC higher than CUSA but both leagues have quality teams. If the MWC network does not become more accessible to people outside the Mountain region (or to some IN the Mountain region) then it would turn out to be a mistake, but the TV coverage should improve. The landscape of power in the conferences changes on a yearly basis and it will be interesting to see which league is stronger in the next few years. I do feel playing in the CUSA West would have been a better fit for a traditionalist like myself.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

Phil,

Thank you for your awesome coverage of college football. One of my favorite sections is where you list the depth charts. The guys that don't play as much if at all work just as hard as the starters and deserve recognition also. But the one thing i would like to comment on is the little coverage people give to the smaller divisions (Div. II and III). I would someday love to see your full coverage of those teams also. Those teams play with heart and for the love of the game and the only time they are on national TV is for their championship games. I did receive the west coast magazine with your Div. IAA forecast but I thought you would have the depth chart and full coverage in there too. Again I hope someday that you can come out with those magazines.

*Thank you
Dion Rodriguez*

Dion,

First of all let me thank you for purchasing the Pac-10/IAA Rgional magazine. That is the first step to bigger coverage for the small schools. I would love to devote the thousands of man hours it would take to give IAA (FCS) Division II and Division III schools added coverage and include depth charts on each. I can foresee a separate magazine with one full page for each IAA team and a quarter page each for the smaller schools. You did your part to make that happen by purchasing a magazine and if there is that type of interest (people buying the Pac 10 Regional) then I will invest the time and money into the added coverage.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

I have bought your book for the last 5 years, and needless to say, it's the best in the business. This will be the first year however that I will be getting your pro-football edition and I'm really looking forward to it. My question to you is what do you think of Notre Dame's defense this year? Will it be more improved because of Corwin Brown, or is the talent level just not there yet? Especially with the losses on the D-line and linebacker in particular. Thanks and looking forward to your response!

Jake Bernath
Wauseon, OH

Jake,

On paper the system appears to fit the athletes on hand. Although they only have 5 starters back they could be stronger, but may not improve on last year's 23.8 ppg allowed as they do take on the #12 schedule in the country. Generally teams have 65 to 70% of their lettermen returning but Notre Dame only has 51.7% (30 of 58) so they are a very young team with a tough schedule. Next year's Notre Dame team may have as many as 16 or 17 returning starters and the defensive changes will be in the second year with a veteran unit. Corwin Brown will look a lot smarter next year, but I like the change in schemes this season.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

This is my second year to purchase your magazine and love it! You said Tennessee averaged only 108 ypg running last year. That was the lowest production since 1964! Do you have any thoughts on why Tennessee can't run the ball anymore? They have had a lower running production each year since 1998.

- David Fite

David,

It was probably a combination of things. First of all Tennessee plays in the SEC and last year the SEC was loaded with top-notch rush defenses. Of course they have to play SEC teams every year so that was not a huge factor. QB mobility is always a big factor in college football rush offenses. Erik Ainge had -102 yards net rushing (includes sacks) and only 14 gross yards gained rushing. Last year the Vols had to replace 3 starters from the O-line so they were on the inexperienced side heading into the year. RB Arian Foster who tied a school freshman record with 5 straight 100 yard games was injured most of the year. The Vols had EXCEPTIONAL WR's last year who were a threat to take it to the house anytime they caught the ball, like vs Cal when 3 short passes turned into LONG TD "receptions". All of those factors contributed to the lowest rush average since 1964. This year they are deeper at RB, do not have the game breaking WR's (so will run the ball more), have a more veteran offensive line and the SEC has a lot of young defenses this year. Add it all up and if you look at page 324 of the magazine I am projecting 154 ypg rushing which would be their 2nd best total in 6 years! (they avg 186 ypg rush in 2004).

Thanks for writing,
Phil

Hello!

I discovered your magazine three years ago and have been a junky ever since. I am a complete stat geek and am fascinated by your power ratings (at least the two you have detailed in the magazine). The Top 25 polls are a complete joke and just a popularity contest, that's why I am intrigued by your rankings. How do you find all the information for each team? Also, how do you adjust the ratings during the season? For example, you say you may give a 7.87 rating to a team's QB position. Now let's say this quarterback throws for 400 yards and three touchdowns against a rather good team - completely exceeds expectations. How do you go about adjusting the positional rating? If this is a secret of the trade, then by all means I understand. Last year, I took your ratings and tried to adjust throughout the season but didn't feel that I was executing it properly.

Kudos to you and your staff, keep up the great work!

Thanks!

Kevin Bostic

Kevin,

Thank you very much and naturally I am a "stat geek" like yourself. I have a staff of

anywhere from 20-30 employees (depending on the time of year) and we work on nothing but football year round and that gives us an edge when compiling football information.

I have a computer formula which tracks in season stats and breaks them down into a rating during the year. A 400 yard effort vs a solid defense would boost a QB's stock. I do not just rely on the computer however, I also look at the players PS# and NFL potential as well as the stats and the computer may be calling for one number but I could rate it slightly higher or lower. As an example when Timmy Smith set the Super Bowl record for rush yards in 1998 vs Washington his computer number would have risen drastically but he never became a full-time starter after that one big game. I do make adjustments every week to the position rankings but usually like to see 2 or 3 solid games in a row before making a good sized change in anyone's power rating. The strength of opponent is huge as I would rate a 100 yards effort by a RB vs a Top 5 rush D stronger than a 175 effort vs a weak IAA rush defense.

I hope this helps you,
Phil

Phil or whoever reads this,

I'm a big fan of the magazine and the SEC profiles, and I really REALLY want to get a copy of your 2007 edition. However, I've been in Spain for the past 7 months and will be here until football season starts, when, thank God, I will get to go back home to SC and watch the Gamecocks! Do you know of any distributors here (Barcelona) that would have your magazine, or of any companies that would sell and ship me your magazine? I've looked online but couldn't find any. Any help would be appreciated, fútbol isn't football and I'm craving something to read and get me pumped up for the next season!

Stevo in Spain

P.S. Great job on the magazine! I especially like it when you do radio shows, I remember some of the 2005 Tennessee shows and the people calling in giving you hell. Actions (and great predictions) speak louder than words!

Stevo,

Thanks for the comments! I will have our office contact you about shipping out some this week so you have them well before the season starts! Also, be sure to check out the 2007 Radio Shows, we have numerous radio interviews archived.

*Thanks for writing,
Phil*

Phil,

Your poll for best rivalries is good, but I believe you left the best one out. It is South Carolina vs. Clemson. An instate bitterness is felt all year long. It definately should replace West Va./Pitt in your list.

*Sincerely,
Gamecock Scott*

Scott,

I will run the poll again this year either just before the season or just before rivalry week. We will take off one of the games that had 1% of the vote and put in the Clemson/South Carolina rivalry and see how it comes out. Check the site often so you don't miss the poll. I do consider it one of the top rivalries out there and it will be interesting to see where it ends up!

*Thanks for writing,
Phil*

Phil,

I just saw your response to my question on your website. Thanks so much for taking the time to answer! I have been reading more of your magazine (which is excellent by the way) since I submitted the question. I see that you are high on Miami and Virginia's chances to significantly improve this year, as well as liking Va. Tech and that other SEC school you pick as SEC east champs. That kind of leaves us as the odd man out. Like you say, we have some tough games.

You may be right, but hope springs eternal in an alumni's mind. I really think you will see a step change in GT's offense for the better this year. It will have to be based on a good running game with HB Tashard Choice and FB Mike Cox behind an OL that returns basically intact. That running game should help set up a balanced passing attack that will compensate for losing Calvin Johnson (somewhat). A lot will depend on how good our new Offensive Coordinator John Bond performs. Everything so far seems very positive with him, but we have yet to play for anything.

I think the Notre Dame game should tell a lot. If we crank it up against the Irish, get ready to revise your assessment. If we can't seem to score again this year, I'll know you have us pegged.

*Again, thanks for taking the time to answer a fan.
Doug*

Doug,

Georgia Tech could easily upset my apple cart as I do not have them a big underdog in any particular game this year and last season they whipped a pretty good Virginia Tech team on the road and I rate the ACC Coastal as one of the toughest divisions in football. Check out my Phil Steele's Weekly Notes for July 17th where I go over which divisions are the toughest in the NCAA.

Thanks again,
Phil

Phil, do you take conf. schedules into account when rating teams among the same conf? With the unbalanced schedules team play, such as Iowa who misses both OSU and Michigan; LSU who plays Florida at home but dodges UGA and Tenn, I'm sure there are teams in the ACC and Big 12 who seem to skate by as well. I think Iowa has a serious chance at going 11-1 or even 12-0 if they upset Wisc. But I still wouldn't think they were worthy of the Nat'l Championship, their schedule is no tougher than Boise State's last year.

Kevin,

The conference schedules are a huge part in my conference predictions as my ratings are based purely on conference records. As an example I rate Alabama and Auburn very close in terms of talent this year but Alabama plays Miss St, Ole Miss and Vandy on the road (as well as Auburn) while the Tigers have to play Florida, LSU, Arkansas and Georgia on the road!

Iowa does avoid Ohio St and Michigan this year and should be back towards the top of the Big 10. Keep in mind that prior to last year they had the best record vs Big 10 foes from 2002-'05 but did not catch a lot of breaks last season. They do have to play Penn St and Wisconsin on the road and will be an underdog in both games and also face the most experienced team in the Big 10 (Purdue) on the road. However, Iowa has won EACH of their last 3 trips to those sites in the last 3 years and if they get solid play out of their young QB then your 11 or 12 win scenario is indeed possible!

Thanks for writing,
Phil