

July 5th

Phil,

*What are the top ten must watch games for the 2007 college football season? Also, what are a few games that may fly under the radar that may be entertaining? This is my second year buying your college football preview magazine. After being amazed last year, I rushed to my local book store the day it was released this year. I will be sending away tomorrow for your free NFL preview magazine thanks to your free offer. Thank you and all of your staff for your obvious hard work and I will continue to tell all about your magazine.*

Nathan Smith

Fort Wayne, IN

Nathan,

I will have my Top Ten games to watch in one of my Phil's Weekly Notes columns in either July or early August. When I do that I will also include a "Games under the Radar" in that article. Thanks for writing in with those ideas for the site!

Phil

Dear Mr. Steele,

*I have been looking at various Preseason College Football magazines and by the way the only one I have bought is yours. I am a huge PSU fan and I have noticed they are not favored in many magazines except really yours. I feel this team is special Austin Scott can be like Larry Johnson and come out unexpectantly and be one of the top runners this season. Anthony Morelli is destined for greatness and he will shine this year. Their defense is solid this year and their receiving corp is one of the top groups in the nation and Soph. Chris Bell should add to the depth at this position. But back to my main point, if PSU beats Michigan on the road do you think that will mean an undefeated season for the Lions and Joe Pa can go out on top. This team reminds me of the '94 unrewarded Lions that were undefeated and faced a very similar schedule like a top ranked Michigan on the road. I would like to hear your thoughts on this connection and if you think they can go undefeated in 07'?*

*Thanks in advance Mr. Steele your magazine is the best!!!*

Signed, Chris

Chris,

Yes, I do feel this way and I wrote about it in my weekly notes column for July 3rd-9th! Check out Phil's weekly notes. [Click Here](#)

Thanks for writing,

Phil

Good Afternoon,

*Let me be honest up front; I am an ALABAMA fan. Although I do believe my question is just. SEC All Conference QB's, 1st and 2nd team I am fine with, but when a completely unproven Tim Tebow takes 3rd... come on Phil, don't tell me you drink the Kool-Aid too!! Let's forget that if he tries to run like he enjoys doing, (WAIT, IS HE RUNNING TO THE LEFT, SURPRISE!!) he will be on the IR by the 5th game of the season. Ok, lets move on, lets discuss the "great" Matthew Stafford. I know you enjoy stats so let's look at last season. 256*

attempts, 135 completions, for a 52% avg. 7 td's with 13 Int's, and a total efficiency of 108.99. Not bad for your 1st season, but wait there's more. A young stud named John Parker Wilson also starting his 1st season at the helm. 379 attempts, 216 completions, for a 57% rating. 17 td's with 10 int's and a total efficiency of 126.51. We both know he should have had more touchdowns but with the lack of lets say effective play calling inside the red zone he just did not have the chances. Now do not get me wrong Stafford will be a very good Quarterback but at this point how could you put Stafford let alone Tebow (QUICK HE'S RUNNING TO THE LEFT!) in front of a man that will have a new starting running back and 2 very good receivers in Keith Brown and D.J. Hall. We both know the wide outs at Georgia could not even catch a disease from Paris Hilton. Ok, sorry to Paris, I know she has changed her ways, but when your top receiver (Mohamed Massaquoi) complains that Stafford throws too hard, well, that is not a good sign. I look forward to a rebuttal. Thanks for the time and ROLL TIDE!!!!

Beau McHan

Beau,

I appreciate the detail of your question. Good stats and good analysis. I do think Tim Tebow is a better fit for the Urban Meyer offense than Chris Leak was and he will not be used as just a gimmick type running QB. I thought Stafford showed great improvement as the season went on last year but did finish strong with a 3-1 ratio vs the tough defenses of Auburn, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech. When I do an all conference team many times there are TOO many good players at a position and I end up leaving some excellent players out. You will notice already that I go 4 deep in my all SEC team which is more than anybody else does. As you know I am very high on the Tide this year and I was very impressed with John Parker Wilson in his first year as a starter. One of his most impressive games was his first road start in a hostile environment at Arkansas and he hit 16 of 20 for 243 yards. I just checked my projected stats in the back of the magazine and I have the Tide leading the SEC in passing this year with 281 ypg which means he should top 3000 yards passing! How deep is the SEC in quality QB's? Also not making my SEC team is Brandon Cox of Auburn, Chris Nickson of Vanderbilt and Blake Mitchell of South Carolina and can make a good case for each of them being on the Preseason SEC team as well. You have to love SEC football!

Thanks for writing,

Phil

Phil,

*I am just curious to hear your rationale behind the #16 ranking you gave Wisconsin in your pre-season rankings. It appears that you differ greatly from the other "experts" in the field of College Football and I was wondering where you came up with such a low ranking.*

*Thank you,*

*Patrick Torpey*

Patrick,

Wisconsin will likely be in the AP Top 10 this year as looking at preseason.stassen.com I see that every preseason magazine listed as of July 2nd (Lindy's, Athlon, Sporting News, Street and Smith's and CBS SportsLine) all have the Badgers in the Top 10 anywhere from #3 to #8. My magazine as you point out has them at #16. If you look at last years team which was 12-1 and #7 in the final polls and factor in 16 returning starters, then an automatic and easy call is Wisconsin in the top 10.

I go a little against the grain with my predictions and have been fortunate enough to be

the most accurate over the last 8 years combined. He are the factors I used. First of all Wisconsin did not defeat a team during the regular season that was ranked and their only opponent that was ranked was Michigan (their only loss). They avoided Ohio St in Big 10 play. They did have three net close wins last year vs Iowa, Arkansas and Illinois and teams with 3 or more net close wins the previous year have a weaker record 80% of the time. The Badgers are one of the few teams in the country that has SEVEN units out of 8 in the Top units in the country in the front of the magazine. The only unit not on that list is QB where they are young. They also lost outstanding LT Joe Thomas. Wisky did beat a ranked team in the bowl last year but were fortunate as the Razorbacks despite having a banged up RB McFadden had a 368-201 yard edge over the Badgers. On page 318 of the magazine I list the teams whose schedules became dramatically easier or more difficult in 2007. Wisconsin fits into the "Going Down" box as their schedule went from #87 to #39 which is 48 spots more difficult. Teams in this box have had a weaker record 85% of the time. Looking at their specific schedule I have Wisconsin losing at Ohio St and Penn St two very tough road tests. I also have two tossups games with one being a home game vs Michigan and the other a road game at Illinois (Illini very nearly beat them last year in Madison). Picking them to win one and lose one would have the Badgers dropping 3 games and despite a preseason top 10 ranking that would have them at about #16.

Thanks for writing  
Phil

*Phil,*

*Reading some of your stuff on line, I notice not much to say about the fighting Irish. I'm a huge fan of the Irish and I do recognize that this could be a troubling year. The Irish lost a lot seniors last year and this could be a rebuilding year, but I feel strongly that if Charlie can figure out his Qb situation, along with the new young receivers coming in the fall, the Irish just might surprise a lot of people. It seems Corwin Brown is doing good things on the defense. The Irish are young and the talent is really starting to come back to South Bend, keep an eye on em. If you remember in 88 after ND beat WVU in the Fiesta Bowl, Lou said, this team wasn't suppose to be this good and that next year was supposed to be the year, well this year may surprise you. Great Magazine, thanks for all you do for college football.*

*Jim Settle*

Jim,

I just did a radio show this week 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 so he shares your sentiments.

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 reutrnng 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.

Thanks for writing but MORE IMPORTANTLY THANKS FOR BEING IN THE MILITARY AND SERVING OUR GREAT COUNTRY!

Phil Steele

*Hey Phil,*

*I, like many other people, would like to point out that your hard work on this year's magazine has paid off and that it is by far the best college football preview out there. Also, I can't wait until this year starts because I'm so optimistic about my teams; especially interesting Illinois. Phil I was very excited to see that you picked Illinois to make the Insight Bowl this year, but could quiet Illinois even possibly win 7 games... or more? I know I may seem a little too confident about our chances, but with all of these skill players (Williams, Mendenhall, Benn, Cumberland, Vontae Davis, J Leman...) should I expect a run at 3rd place in the conference?*  
Billy

Billy,

For all the reasons that I listed on page 70 of this years magazine, I am VERY high on Illinois this year. They were much better than their 2-10 record indicates and in my July 10th column of Phil's Weekly Notes I lead off with a little more detail on that. I have them as my #2 Most Improved Team this year and they would have made #1 if not for the schedule. Ideally you like to play the premier teams in the league (in this case Ohio St, Michigan and Penn St) on the road and have the more winnable games at home. Illinois draws Wisconsin, Penn St and Michigan at home making for a difficult schedule. They also have to play Iowa, Ohio St and Missouri away from home. It is a very difficult schedule but keep in mind they outplayed both Penn St and Wisconsin on the road last year. Arrelious Benn is my impact freshman of the year and with an upset or two 3rd place is possible even against this schedule (I have them picked for 7th behind 3 teams who I have tied for 4th). I rate their defense #27 in the country and last year they allowed just 310 ypg and lose just FOUR lettemen from that side of the ball. Check out Phil Steele's Weekly Notes on July 10th.

Good luck and thanks for writing

Phil Steele

*Dear Phil,*

*I just bought my first copy of your magazine and I would like to compliment you on the amount of info and statistics. Really great! As a Georgia Tech grad and fan, though, I was left wondering why you have the team ranked so low?*

*Towards the back you discuss your Lettermen Returning System. In that discussion you say there are 4 teams this year that have 79% of lettermen returning (but less than 16 returning starters). They are Oklahoma, FSU, Louisville and Georgia Tech (we have 15 starters returning). You say that based on previous years statistics, this gives a 68% chance of bettering last year's record. If that happens I guess technically we should be at least 9-4, since we went 9-5 last year (with the ACC champ as an extra game). But really, 10-4, or maybe 10-3, seem quite possible. But for some reason, you end up ranking us at 42 in your national rankings (while ranking the other three teams above no lower than 8th in the country). You have GT at*

38th in your power poll. Our 2007 opponents winning percentage is down at 56th, and our 2007 strength of schedule is at #54, which shouldn't be too bad. So I haven't been able to figure out why you have us so low. I think a big part of it may be because we do not have a starting QB returning, but in Georgia Tech's case, that's almost certainly a good thing, as you note in your team write-up.

*But I still have a lot of stuff to read about, so maybe the answer will pop out. I realize the ACC is a crap shoot to predict this year, but I was curious about your reasoning. Any thoughts would be appreciated.*

*Thanks*

*Doug Whitson*

Doug,

I do list a lot of general charts and graphs in the magazine but I do not base my assessment of a team on any ONE factor. I look at returning lettermen, overall talent, coaching, last years breaks (turnovers, close wins losses, ypp factor) and more. I have 8 sets of power ratings and run them through a computer. Sometimes like with Hawaii this year all 8 have the same forecast (12-0). Other times like with Boston College this year the 8 sets have a mixed result with one set calling them to finish 7-1 in the ACC and another calling for a 2-6 finish. I personally go through each game for the upcoming year and make my final analysis.

Let me specifically address the Georgia Tech forecast for this year. I feel Tech will have one of the best defenses in the country and greatly respect the job Jon Tenuta does on that side of the ball. He has 8 starters back from last years D that allowed just 18.4 ppg. The offense does lose its star in WR Calvin Johnson who was a unique and very gifted athlete. Despite a new QB they will be more efficient passing the ball as last years starter hit just 44% of his passes. I was impressed with QB Taylor Bennett in the bowl as he threw for 326 yards vs a solid WV defense. The schedule is difficult with road trips to Notre Dame, Virginia, Maryland and Miami Fla and home games vs my projected SEC East champ Georgia and my projected ACC Coastal champ Virginia Tech. They also have to face BC and Clemson at home. The bottom line is the schedule is very difficult and while GT under Gailey has had some great wins like road victories over #10 NCSt, #20 Clemson, #23 Maryland, #16 Auburn, #3 Miami Florida, and #21 Virginia Tech their highest win total under Gailey was 9 wins. Playing the schedule that they do this year it will be tough to top last years win total despite the lettermen theory and they may fall into the 32% of the teams in that category that do not improve their record. I think Gailey is doing a fine job and there is not a single game on the schedule that you would mark down as a sure loss but it is tough for a team to play its "A" game every week of the season.

Thanks for writing

Phil

*Phil*

*When was the last time you attended a college football game in person? Do you miss that part about your job now? Keep up the amazing work and Go Bucks.*

*Adam*

Adam,

Unfortunately that is one of the negatives of my job. I have not attended a college football Saturday game in over 10 years. If I was to take the time to travel to a game on Saturday I

would probably be gone a minimum of 5 hours. I would be missing 5 hours of watching TWELVE games so the potential would be to miss 24 games just to attend one and my schedule would not allow for that.

Thanks for the comments

Phil

*Hey Phil,*

*As a first time reader, I have a few questions. How do you calculate your home field edge ratings, and what do they exactly mean; is there a max rating or min rating you can have? One other question is, where you list the number of returning starters, there sometimes is an asterisk next to one of the number, what exactly does this refer to?*

*Thanks for all the hard work.*

*Ryan*

Ryan,

The home field edges have numerous factors involved and it is a combination of the different factors. I take into account the size of the home stadium, the attendance, the percentage of the stadium that is full each Saturday, the teams record at home over last year and the last 5 years, the loudness of each stadium during a game. That final factor is important as a stadium like Autzen Stadium which only holds 54,000 is actually louder than some 100,000+ seat stadiums due to the fan fervor and the fact the seats are so close to the field. The asterisk on the offense is pertaining to the QB. If their QB from last year is back the offense has an asterisk next to the number of returning starters and if he is not than the team does not have an asterisk.

Thanks for writing

Phil

*Phil*

*Thanks for giving a page to Western Kentucky. All of the other Publications just left us out. What is your opinion of the Sun Belt Improving. Do you think the league is signing better athletes and in the coming years can move out of the 11 th ranked conference.*

*Don*

Don,

I think the Sun Belt is an improving league and the addition of Western Kentucky only aides that cause. Things can change quickly in how conferences are perceived and check out my writeup on Big East in my July 10th weekly notes. I will officially welcome Western Kentucky to 1A next year with 2 full pages!

Thanks for writing

Phil