

JUNE 29th

Phil,

Thanks for doing such a thorough job breaking down all of the College Football teams. It is much appreciated! Can you tell me where you get the most comprehensive, up to date injury and weather information in College football during the season? I can't seem to find a good site that lists injured STARTERS as opposed to injured players in general including backups.

Thanks again!

Mike

Mike,

As you can tell we are putting a lot more emphasis on the Phil Steele.com website this year and we want to make it everyone's stop for the latest college football information. This year we will have an injury section which details who is out for the upcoming weeks games and also an injury tab which shows you how many starts each team has lost to injury during the year. The site will keep adding information each week and this will be the most comprehensive place for the latest injuries and weather update on the games this year.

Thanks, Phil

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Phil, What are your thoughts on Penn State TE-Andrew Quarless? I expect him to be among the top TE's in the nation this year. Thanks, love your annual preview as always.

Ryan

Ryan,

Coming into the season I list him at #21 at TE but keep in mind he is a sophomore and my lists are geared towards next year's draft therefore Juniors and Seniors are more likely to be listed ahead of him. Quarles was my PS#20 TE out of high school and started 9 games as a true frosh at a position at Penn St where true frosh rarely play, let alone start. He is not only a solid blocker with great size at 6'5" 252 lbs but snagged 21 receptions as a true frosh (13.7 ypc). The only area he needs to improve is to stop running into Joe Paterno on the sideline (which happened twice last year) – that's the sure way to get into an 80 year old's dog house. I also think he will be one of the top TE's in the game and he should appear on the preseason John Mackey Award list. Each week on this site that list will be updated with the John Mackey Player of the Week. I have a feeling that he will make that list once or twice this year and if Penn St has the type of season that I expect he could be in the running for the Mackey Award at the end of the year.

Thanks for writing and the comments,

Phil

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Phil,

I just got your College National Preview magazine and I was very impressed. Your many keys and angles that you used for your forecasts are simply amazing. As a high school math teacher, I was very impressed with all of the number crunching that you and your staff must do. As a South Carolina Gamecock fan, I truly hope that you are on the money or at least close. I really would love to beat Georgia and mess up your SEC East prognostication, but you are the only magazine that I have seen that gives Spurrier and the Gamecocks much respect. I do believe, having watched him for three of the last four years, that Cory Boyd is a top 20 running back if he ever had a quality offensive line the whole country would know about him.

I just hope it all comes together as you predicted and thanks for the great job. I am planning to order your SEC Preview and I would also like to see your 1AA or CFC section but I have little interest in the PAC 10 so probably won't get it.

Thanks again, Dondi Brown

PS: I also enjoyed your piece on Cleveland. I was born there 50 years ago and still pull for the Browns and Indians.

Donald,

Thanks for purchasing my College Football Preview and the SEC regional and for writing in. I also appreciate the fact that you are originally from Cleveland. I want you to see all the work we did on the 1AA this year and since you have already purchased two magazines, I will be sending you the Pac 10 regional for FREE.

Thanks for the comments and for writing,
Phil

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Phil, After 10 years of success in WAC/MWC play and some very notable non-conference victories against Top 25 competition, what has happened with the struggling Colorado State Rams? Will CSU get right this season? Do you see any way Sonny Lubick's team can pull off a huge upset at home against Cal or at TCU?

Can't wait to read this year's college football Bible!

Todd - Denver

Todd,

From 1994 (Lubick's 2nd year) to 2003 the team NEVER finished below 3rd place in the conference standings and in EIGHT of the ten years they were either FIRST or SECOND! If you asked me this same question last year I think the easy answer to their struggles in 2004 and 2005 was the defense which allowed Lubick-era highs of 29.5 ppg and 30.8 ppg in those two years thanks mostly to rush defenses that allowed 5.2 ypc and 5.1 ypc respectively. Interestingly even in that 2005 season the team was still tied for 2nd in the MWC and made a bowl game (but forgot to show up for the bowl in that 51-30 loss to Navy). Last year it appeared things were back on track as the defense allowed just 21.9 ppg and the

Rams opened the year 4-1 and appeared on their way to a 5-1 starting leading Air Force at the half 21-3. Unfortunately they never recovered from that game and stunningly lost their last 7. A young QB and offense were the culprits last year (as well as some bad momentum) and they averaged just 16.8 ppg which was almost a FULL 7 points below the lowest ppg Colo St had had on offense in the last FIFTEEN years (23.7 in '04).

The good news is that this is the most veteran and complete team Lubick has fielded with 18 returning starters. His previous high for returning starters was 17 in 1994 and that team went 10-2 and played Michigan in the Holiday Bowl!! His 2nd highest total was 16 returning starters in 1997 and that team went 11-2 and beat Missouri in the Holiday Bowl!! Before you book your reservations to San Diego for this year's Holiday Bowl they do have to play TCU, BYU, UNLV and New Mexico all on the road and also play California, Houston and Colorado in non conference play.

I do not see them having a shot at beating TCU as the Frogs were thoroughly dominant in last year's game (33 FD and 616 yards) and have that game in Fort Worth. I do give them a shot at California as they catch the Bears in a rare trip to altitude and having just played a big revenge game vs Tennessee the previous week.

I rate Colorado St as my #16 Most Improved Team which means I think they have an EXCELLENT shot at going from a losing record to being bowl eligible and I have great respect for Sonny Lubick's coaching ability.

Thanks for writing,
Phil

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*Phil, I will admit when I am wrong. Last year I wrote in ridiculing your pick of Arkansas as the #13 team in the country and the Most Improved team. They were 5-6 and 4-7 the previous two years and I could not even imagine them making a bowl or being in the top 40. As it turns out they got as high as #5 in the polls, won the SEC West. In the same email last year I questioned your sanity in picking a 1-11 Kent St team as one of the top 2 in the MAC East. Once again I am man enough to admit I am wrong. I am still looking for this years magazine (I live in a small town and our newsstand has not gotten them in yet). Instead of ridiculing your pick I was wondering if you could let me know WHO IS THIS YEARS ARKANSAS? ALSO WHO WOULD BE THIS YEARS KENT ST?
Robert Anderson, Mississippi*

Robert,

Thank you VERY much for your question. Normally when I pick a team higher or lower than expected, I hear a lot of reasons prior to the pick about why I am not very smart (usually stronger words) but after a team performs as I expected I RARELY hear from anyone letting me know that I was not as dumb as they thought.

This year's Arkansas looks to be from the same conference and it is ALABAMA. Like Arkansas, the Tide is off a losing season. Like Arkansas, the

Tide is coming off a 2-6 record in SEC play. Like Arkansas, the Tide is much better than last year's record indicated as they actually OUTGAINED SEC FOES by 32.3 ppp (Ark was +31.3 in '05). Like Arkansas, they suffered a lot of close losses the previous year and could easily have beaten teams like Arkansas (OT), Tennessee (lose by 3) and Auburn (364-261 yd edge).

Like Arkansas, they now have a veteran team including 9 starters back on offense (Ark had 18 ret starters LY). Like Arkansas, they now have a manageable schedule with most of their toughest games at home and very winnable road games at Mississippi, Miss St and Kentucky (Auburn their only other SEC road game is a tossup).

Last year Arkansas had to win AT AUBURN to win the SEC West and if Alabama wins AT HOME vs LSU they could very well be the surprise winner of the SEC West.

I feel Memphis will be the most improved team in the country this year for many reasons that I list on page 208 of this year's magazine. I see that you sent this a few weeks back and I am just getting to the response now so hopefully you have gone out and purchased this year's magazine already!

Thanks for writing,

Phil

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Phil,

First of all, we West Virginia University fans and alums want to apologize for Shawn's letter printed on page 23 of your 2007 college football yearbook--there is no need for profanity and the uncivil tone of Shawn's letter. Please don't assume most Mountaineer fans are like that---understanding however that we do have to put up with a lot of abuse over the years from other schools' and the media (like the University of Virginia's band doing a parody of WVU fans several years ago using the most stereotypic and antiquated "hillbilly" references and a regular labeling of WVU fans as "hoopies" and even worst by a select minority of our Backyard Brawl opponents at the University of Pittsburgh). Heck, even credible journalists like Brent Musberger repeated some of these stereotypes during his TV broadcast of West Virginia games in the Eighties and Nineties. But enough about this, I guess intense college rivalries tend to produce these kind of verbal and mean spirited attacks and WVU is not the only victim. Anyway, please accept the apology of the vast majority of well mannered WVU fans for the tone and incivility of Shawn's correspondence.

Now, let me express congratulations to you and your staff for another excellent yearbook--the 2007 one is even better than the previous years. Thanks for listening to us readers and acting on our feedback about improving your publications. And kudos for your long-term accuracy and cogent commentary about college football. For instance, I absolutely agree with you regarding a college football playoff--your idea to seed the top four teams ONLY and continue to emphasize bowl games rather than create a larger basketball type tournament is just what we fans would like to see. You're right on the mark about the value of

the college football regular season and how it would be illogical as well as disappointing to dilute that with an eight or sixteen team playoff format.

Now, a question: Phil, how is it that my feedback to your publication in 2005 and 2006 regarding an error in your publication seems to have been ignored yet again!--On page 157, the WVU section, you continue to list St. Louis Rams QB and former Mountaineer QB Marc Bulger's career seasons incorrectly as '96 - '98--WHEN IN FACT BULGER PLAYED IN 1999 as well. For instance on November 27, 1999, Bulger completed 20 of 30 passes for 331 yards in a 52-21 defeat of Pittsburgh (the year before, on the exact same date--November 27--Bulger had another banner day against those same Panthers (setting a WVU record with six TD passes) in a 52-14 victory at Three Rivers Stadium). So, please correct Bulger's career years to '96-'99. By the way, I was glad to read in the Pitt section (page 165) that you did recognize that this fall's December 1, 2007 Backyard Brawl is the 100th edition. Let me point out something you may not know, although the Panthers lead the all-time series 59-37-3, most of those games, especially in the first part of this century were played in Pittsburgh. Don't get me wrong, Pitt was a national power in many of those years, more so than WVU's occasional forays into the national limelight then--but Pitt almost always forced WVU to schedule those games in the Steel City and probably justifiably so as the roads to Morgantown back then were treacherous, curvy, and time consuming to drive. And since 1962 when both schools agreed to play home and home every year, the Mountaineers lead the series 23-19-2. Another feather in WVU's cap is that WVU holds more all-time victories (653 to 639) than Pitt despite having played three less seasons than the Panthers!

Another question--How about mentioning (by a shorthand type method such as TIU=7, for instance listed after "Nebraska" to indicate the Huskers rank in 7 of your eight Top 25 Top Individual Units, in your "Preseason Top 40" poll) how many of your eight top individual units a team appeared in when you list your Top 40 poll?

Question #3: Why is there NO coverage of WVU's spring game and no mention of the Mountaineers in your Hardcore Fan Notes? Please correct that in your 2008 edition.

Another note about an error that you may be aware by now--but just in case...here goes. On page 154, WVU linebacker Reed Williams is listed twice on the 4th Team Big East. Did you intend to name another WVU linebacker along with Williams and who would that be?

Question #4: Phil, while you are to be commended for giving the Big East props for a very successful 2007 season that saw them finish second to the SEC, how can you drop the Big East again to the sixth most powerful conference position in 2007--especially with your comments about not only the Big Three--WVU, Louisville and Rutgers, but understanding that you almost pulled the trigger and picked USF to win the league?! And as a WVU fan, it pains me to say this, but with Pitt's recruiting classes, it seems inevitable that they will break through and make a bowl and even challenge for the conference in 2007 or 2008.

Finally, I want to DISAGREE strenuously with your justification (page 314) of selecting WVU QB Patrick White on your 4th team All America squad as well as

picking him seventh in your Heisman race article while relegating him to NUMBER 16 in your Top 65 Quarterbacks list! The knock on black quarterbacks that relegated Major Harris, possibly a player just as talented as Michael Vick (if not more) to not get a legitimate NFL shot has been discredited thanks to years of toil by Superbowl winning QB Doug Williams, and other quarterbacks who also rely on both their feet and their arm--the prime example being Michael Vick (It pains me as a Mountaineer to say this as well, since Vick's brother gave WVU fans "the bird" not too many years ago) and many others. Anyway, White, the Alabama Athlete of the Year, joins a pretty prestigious group of athletes who have won that and other awards and his accolades and talent justify at least a top ten listing--his NFL future notwithstanding.

Thanks Phil for putting Steve Slaton on the ACC/Big East regional cover--it was long overdue that WVU's players get some cover props from your publications--we WVU fans are hoping that his 2007 performance and stats justify placement on your national cover as well in 2008!

Keep up the great work!

Best regards, Jeffrey Mason

Author of "This Day/This Week in Mountaineer Sports History." Check it out on www.wvmetronews.com (check right margin). Here's a recent example:

June 24-30, 2007

This Week in Mountaineer Sports History:

After tying an all-time WVU football record for wins—11-- in one season (set by Don Nehlen's 1988 and 1993 teams) and bringing home the Mountaineer's first ever Sugar Bowl Championship Trophy, Rich Rodriguez signed a contract extension through the 2012 season [June 24, 2006]; West Virginia University tailback Robert Walker (who rushed 529 times for 2,620 career yards from 1992-95), the high school state 100 meter dash champion in 1990, was born on this date in Huntington, W.Va. [June 26, 1972]; WVU Sports Hall of Fame inductee (Class of 1992) Fred Schaus was born on this date. Schaus was a WVU basketball letterman (1947-49), coach (146-37 record from 1955-60 including six Southern Conference titles and an appearance in the NCAA Championship Final) and athletic director (1981-89) who also starred in the National Basketball Association as a player and coach [June 30, 1925].

Jeffrey,

Thank you first of all for the VERY detailed questions and the kind comments. Question #1. We just went into the computer on next year's page and corrected the problem. Thank you very much for your eye for detail.

Question #2. That is an excellent suggestion and hopefully you will see TIU in the 2008 Magazine!

Question #3. Another good note. Normally the Hardcore Fan notes is for things that would not fit onto the team pages. If a spring game got chopped out it should have ended up there and while I cannot write on all 119 spring games (not

enough room in the magazine) I will make sure we have coverage on next year's WV spring game.

Question #3A. I LOVE your attention to detail and thank you for pointing this out. Yes, something got lost in the proofing stage and the other 4th team Big East LB should be John Holmes who was a bandit and moved to LB. He started 5 games in 2006 and has good size and speed and flies to the ball much like Mike Lorello did.

Question #4. The problem with the Big East this year is with the bottom half of the standings. Pitt and Cincy are borderline bowl teams while Connecticut and Syracuse will need to catch a lot of breaks to be bowl eligible. The SEC has only two teams who were not in a bowl last year and probably won't be in one this year (Miss St and Ole Miss) and that is out of 12 teams (16.7%) while two from the Big East makes up 25% of the conference and another 25% that need some breaks to get to a bowl. I was wrong on the Big East last year and we shall see where they rank at the end of this season.

Question #5. You are missing the boat on my ranking of Patrick White so low. I would never move a QB up or down in my rankings due to the color of his skin. Look at this year's #1 overall pick Jamarcus Russell. He is 6'6" 260 lbs with a cannon for an arm and completed 68% of his passes with a 28-8 ratio last year. Pat White is 6'2" and only 185 lbs and only had 13 TD passes last year throwing for just 136 ypg. He is a very dangerous runner and I list him 4th team All American but the NFL needs passing QB's as a pure running QB would never last a full season. White can improve on his passing skills but I doubt he will gain the necessary height, weight and arm strength to become a 1st or 2nd round pick as a QB. In my 2005 College Football Preview 5 of my top 6 QB's in the country were African American and if a QB was 6'6" 240 with a cannon for an arm and an accomplished passer, I would not care if he was purple, I would have him as my #1 QB.

Here is a FIRST. A QUESTION that is FIVE TIMES as long as my answer! (normally the other way around)

Thanks for writing, Phil

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Phil,

Purchased your 2007 College Football Guide and I am impressed with all the information that you provide in this college football resource. I have been living in Atlanta for the past 20 years and get my fill of ACC/SEC Football. I do attempt to keep up with the Mid American Conference. Fortunately, you provide much information on the MAC as well as the other mid major conferences through your annual publication. Thank you for providing such a great magazine for us football junkies and non junkies alike!!

Bill Rouse

Bill,

Thanks for buying and reading the magazine and for the kind comments!

Phil

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On your site one comment of new information; Oct. 20 is Marist v. Sacred Heart that has been secured... I know other teams have been scrambling since St Peter's announced they would be no more for football.

STORY

I wandered upon your college football D-IA preview and I was astonished I could not find such an in-depth college preview until now. That having been said, I will be mailing in the page for the NFL preview but is there a way to get a I-AA/FCS preview or is there just not enough data to go into as much depth in each of the I-AA/FCS conferences?

Ryan,

Thank you for the schedule change on the Sacred Heart game and this is not updated on the website. If you come across anything else please let me know as we want the most complete and up to date site on the net.

We do have a 1AA preview this year. We give one full page on each of the 1AA/FCS teams and I am willing to expand on that next year and in future years. Here is a sample of the type of coverage we have on each team as this is the preview on the Colonial Conference. [CLICK HERE](#). If we get enough interest (i.e. People buying the magazine) I would move it up to at least a half page per team next year!

Thanks for writing ,

Phil Steele