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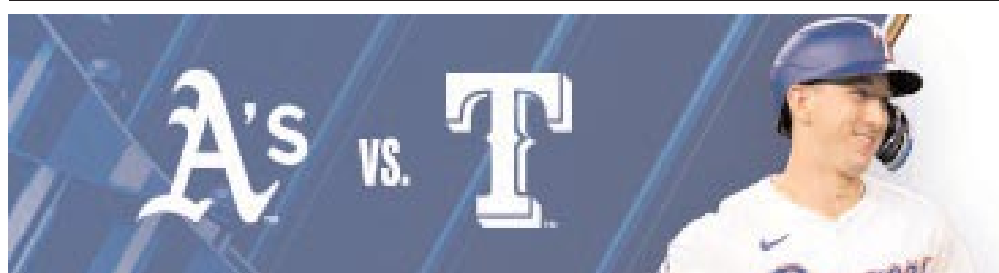
**2024 NFL  
Preview**

Aug. 30 - Sept. 5, 2024

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**FREE**



**AUG. 30 - SEPT. 1**

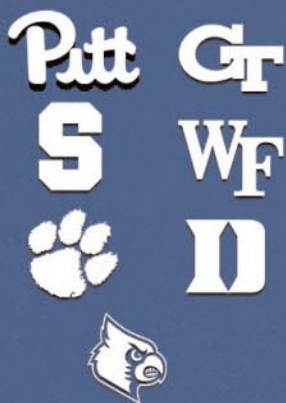


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# 2024 SCHEDULE

## MARCH/APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				28 CHC	29	30 CHC
31 CHC	1 TB	2 TB	3 TB	4	5 HOU	6 HOU
7 HOU	8 HOU	9 OAK	10 OAK	11 OAK	12 HOU	13 HOU
14 HOU	15 DET	16 DET	17 DET	18 DET	19 ATL	20 ATL
21 ATL	22	23 SEA	24 SEA	25 SEA	26 CIN	27 CIN
28 CIN	29	30 WSH				

## JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 SD	3 SD	4 SD	5 TB	6 TB
7 TB	8 LAA	9 LAA	10 LAA	11	12 HOU	13 HOU
14 HOU	15	16 2024 ALL-STAR WEEK 7-11 PM ESPN	17	18	19 BAL	20 BAL
21 BAL	22 CWS	23 CWS	24 CWS	25 CWS	26 TOR	27 TOR
28 TOR	29 STL	30 STL	31 STL			

## MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 WSH	2 WSH	3 KC	4 KC
5 KC	6 OAK	7 OAK	8 2024 ALL-STAR WEEK 7-11 PM ESPN	9	10 COL	11 COL
12 COL	13 CLE	14 CLE	15 CLE	16	17 LAA	18 LAA
19 LAA	20	21 PHI	22 PHI	23 PHI	24 MIN	25 MIN
26 MIN	27	28 AZ	29 AZ	30	31 MIA	

## AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 BOS	3 BOS
4 BOS	5 HOU	6 HOU	7 HOU	8	9 NYY	10 NYY
11 NYY	12 BOS	13 BOS	14 BOS	15 MIN	16 MIN	17 MIN
18 MIN	19 PIT	20 PIT	21 PIT	22	23 CLE	24 CLE
25 CLE	26	27 CWS	28 CWS	29 CWS	30 OAK	31 OAK

## JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 MIA
2 MIA	3 DET	4 DET	5 DET	6	7 SF	8 SF
9 SF	10	11 LAD	12 LAD	13 LAD	14 SEA	15 SEA
16 SEA	17 NYM	18 NYM	19 NYM	20	21 KC	22 KC
23 KC	24 MIL	25 MIL	26 MIL	27 BAL	28 BAL	29 BAL
30 BAL						

## SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 OAK	2 NYY	3 NYY	4 NYY	5 LAA	6 LAA	7 LAA
8 LAA	9	10 AZ	11 AZ	12 SEA	13 SEA	14 SEA
15 SEA	16	17 TOR	18 TOR	19 TOR	20 SEA	21 SEA
22 SEA	23	24 OAK	25 OAK	26 OAK	27 LAA	28 LAA
29 LAA	30					

Schedule subject to change.  
Times to be announced at a later date.

Home Games

Cover Photo:

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## AROUND THE AREA

## LOCAL NEWS OF INTEREST

# SMU to unveil Complex Saturday



The \$100 million, 192,500-square-foot facility anchors the south end of Gerald J Ford Stadium.

SMU quarterback Preston Stone was interrupted by the sounds of drilling and hammering as he recapped his team's season opener against Nevada during a news conference Wednesday morning.

Sitting in a brand new conference room, Stone and his teammates who followed him in were mesmerized by the new facility they get to call home, as the finishing touches are completed around them before Saturday's home opener against Houston Christian.

"It's awesome. We're so freaking lucky," Stone said. "Definitely far and away the coolest locker room I've ever seen and been a part of. Huge thank you to everyone who helped make that possible. We're all just trying to be as grateful as we possibly can."

The construction crews are using every second they have to finish up the brand new Garry Weber End Zone Complex at Gerald J. Ford Stadium set to unveil this weekend. The \$100 million, 192,500-square-foot facility is SMU football's newest home. After a year and a half of construction, the team and staff finally moved in this week

"It's something I've been expecting and

waiting for for a while, so it's kind of exciting to finally get to be in it and get to see everything," safety Isaiah Nwokobia said. "It's so big. It's crazy. We love it."

The project was made possible by a \$50 million commitment from former Mustang Garry A. Weber, the largest gift in the history of SMU athletics. The new facility anchors the south bowl of Ford Stadium and connects the existing east and west gate entries.

The first and third floors make up the Armstrong Football Center and include a locker room, players lounge, rehabilitation and sports medicine center, as well as a weight room with a field entrance where SMU will run out for its home games.

The second floor is the hospitality level with dining and entertainment spaces for student-athletes and fans, including 1,200 club seats.

By closing the end of the stadium, SMU expects it won't just bring a better experience to those inside the new complex, but all fans in attendance.

"I look forward to the game day part of it," athletic director Rick Hart said. "I think it's really going to make a difference in terms of the energy and sound and the experience overall."

Saturday will be the first time fans file into the new seats, though the complex will have a more official unveiling next month.

It's a facility fit for a power-conference program — and one SMU will be able to proudly show off to its new ACC rivals.

"It is coming at a perfect time," Hart said. "It's apropos of this moment and this season and where we're headed."

**Houston Christian (0-0) vs SMU (1-0)  
Saturday, 7:00 / ESPN+**

**Line: N/L**

The SMU Mustangs prepare to kick off its seven-game home slate this Saturday, hosting Houston Christian at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.

The Mustangs are riding high after a 29-24 season-opening victory over Nevada avoiding a near upset, while securing their sixth consecutive season-opening win.

Meanwhile the Huskies coming of a 6-5 finish last season are led by first-year head coach Jason Bachtel who served as the teams offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in 2023.

SMU boasts an impressive eight-game home winning streak, tied for the fourth longest in program history. In their six home victories last season, they averaged a staggering 52.3 points per game.

The Mustangs showcased their offensive prowess against Nevada. RJ Maryland had a career-best performance with 162 receiving yards and a touchdown, while Preston Stone found his rhythm in the second half, throwing for 254 yards and a touchdown.

This is only the second matchup between these two teams, with SMU holding a 1-0 lead in the series after defeating the Huskies in Dallas 63-27 in 2018.

The Mustangs' talent and home-field advantage should ultimately prevail. Expect SMU to dominate the line of scrimmage and come away with some big plays to pull away in the second half for a convincing home victory.

Final Score Prediction: SMU 45, Houston Christian 17

### NCAA Football Poll

Coaches Poll	Pre-Season	AP Poll
1. Georgia	1. Georgia	
2. Ohio State	2. Ohio State	
3. Oregon	3. Oregon	
4. Texas	4. Texas	
5. Alabama	5. Alabama	
6. Ole Miss	6. Ole Miss	
7. Notre Dame	7. Notre Dame	
8. Michigan	8. Penn State	
9. Penn State	9. Michigan	
10. Florida State	10. Florida State	
11. Missouri	11. Missouri	
12. LSU	12. Utah	
13. Utah	13. LSU	
14. Clemson	14. Clemson	
15. Tennessee	15. Tennessee	
16. Oklahoma	16. Oklahoma	
17. Kansas State	17. Oklahoma State	
18. Oklahoma State	18. Kansas State	
19. Miami	19. Miami	
20. Texas A&M	20. Texas A&M	
21. Arizona	21. Arizona	
22. N.C State	22. Kansas	
23. USC	23. USC	
24. Kansas	24. N.C State	
25. Iowa	25. Iowa	

## WEEKLY CALENDAR

	AUGUST 30 FRIDAY	AUGUST 31 SATURDAY	SEPTEMBER 1 SUNDAY	SEPTEMBER 2 MONDAY	SEPTEMBER 3 TUESDAY	SEPTEMBER 4 WEDNESDAY	SEPTEMBER 5 THURSDAY
	Rangers vs Athletics 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Athletics 6:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Athletics 1:35 / Bally's	Rangers vs Yankees 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Yankees 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Yankees 7:05 / Bally's	Rangers vs Angels 7:05 / Bally's
	Roughriders at NW Arkansas 7:05	Roughriders at NW Arkansas 6:05	Roughriders at NW Arkansas 5:15	Roughriders vs Wichita 6:05		Roughriders vs Wichita 7:05	Roughriders vs Wichita 7:05
		FC Dallas vs Colorado 7:30 / TXA 21					
		NEXT GAME: vs Cleveland Sept. 8 / 3:25					
		SMU vs HCU 7:00 / CBSSN					



# SEC football predictions - Week 1



ROBERT CORTINEZ  
RCORTINEZ2@HOTMAIL.COM



The SEC will not play any inter-conference games this week. Out of 16 games, there are 9 games that have the SEC home team as 30 pt or more betting favorites.

There are four games (Georgia v. Clemson, Florida v. Miami, Texas A&M v. Notre Dame and LSU v. USC) whose outcomes could have CFP implications by week 12.

**Univ. Ark. Pine Bluff @ Arkansas**  
**Thursday, 6:30 p.m. / ESPN**  
**War Memorial Stadium, Little Rock**  
**Line: Arkansas: -49.5 / O/U 57.5**

Blow out in the Rock, Coach Sam Pittman will play his entire team. This game will be put on the fast clock in the 4th quarter. Only question will be the final score to cover the line.

**Pick: Arkansas 52 UAPB 10**

**Murray State @ #11 Missouri**  
**Thursday, 7:00 p.m. / SECN**  
**Line: Missouri: -48 / O/U 57.5**

See above. The Tigers roll the Racers and flirt with covering. If Missouri is the team who the pundits predict, could be ugly in Columbia for next door Kentucky neighbors.

**Pick: Missouri 57 Murray State 13**

**Temple @ Oklahoma**  
**Friday, 6:00 p.m.; ESPN**  
**Line: Oklahoma -43 / O/U 58.5**

The Sooners get to coast, just like Arkansas and Missouri in their season opener. However, Temple is a better chal-

lenge and Oklahoma has trouble covering this line.

**Pick: Oklahoma 41 Temple 17**

**#1 Georgia vs. #14 Clemson**  
**Saturday, 11:00 a.m. / ABC**  
**Mercedes Benz Stadium, Atlanta, GA**  
**Line: Georgia -13.5 / O/U 49.5**

Both of these schools campuses are about two hours from this iconic stadium. Home field is a toss up. The Dawgs get this one, but Clemson puts up a fight.

**Pick: Georgia 31 Clemson 20**

**Virginia Tech @ Vanderbilt**  
**Saturday, 11:00 a.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: Vanderbilt +13.5 / O/U 50.5**

The Commodores are home underdogs in their season opener against the Hokies out of the ACC Conference. Virginia Tech returns 22 starters including their entire offense.

**Pick: Virginia Tech 30 Vanderbilt 13**

**Chattanooga @ #15 Tennessee**  
**Saturday, 11:45 a.m. / SECN**  
**Line: Tennessee -38.5 / O/U 53.5**

The Moccasins were 8-5 last year but don't have the talent to keep up with the Volunteers. Big brother Tennessee gets a cupcake win in this interstate contest with FCS Chattanooga.

**Pick: Tennessee 43 Chattanooga 10**

**#19 Miami @ Florida**  
**Saturday, 2:30 p.m. / ABC**  
**Line: Florida +2.5; O/U 53.5**

Florida's Billy Napier and Miami's Mario Cristobal begin their third season as head coaches with slightly warm seats. Both of these South Florida schools need to win this opener to legitimize their respective coaching hires.

**Pick: Florida 30 Miami 27**

**Colorado State @ #4 Texas**  
**Saturday, 2:30 p.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: Texas -32.5 / O/U 59.5**

Texas starts the season with national title hopes. The Longhorns are ranked in the pre-season Top 5 for the first time since 2009. Need to have a solid win before traveling next week to take on defending national champ Michigan.

**Pick: Texas 44 Colorado State 9**

**Old Dominion @ South Carolina**  
**Saturday, 3:15 p.m. / SECN**  
**Line: South Carolina -21 / O/U 52.5**

The Gamecocks take on Sun Belt conference member Old Dominion in their season opener. The Monarchs managed to

go to a bowl game last year but can't match South Carolina's athletes.

**Pick: South Carolina 29 Old Dominion 13**

**Eastern Kentucky @ Mississippi State**  
**Saturday, 5:00 p.m. / SECN+**  
**Line: Mississippi St. -26.5 / O/U 60.5**

The Bulldogs begin the Jeff Lebby coaching era with a home tilt against the Colonels, an FCS program. Mississippi State needs to get out of the blocks fast to start erasing the memory of last year's 4-8 record.

**Pick: Mississippi St. 44 E. Kentucky 19**

**Furman @ #6 Ole Miss**  
**Saturday, 6:00 p.m. / SECN+**  
**Line: Ole Miss -41.5 / O/U 60.5**

The Furman Paladins were 10-3 last year and are ranked #14 in the Preseason FCS Top 25. Ole Miss is looking to win a national championship and can't overlook this game on its quest.

The Rebs roll in Oxford behind All-SEC QB Jaxson Dart.

**Pick: Ole Miss 55 Furman 20**

**Western Kentucky @ #5 Alabama**  
**Saturday, 6:00 p.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: Alabama -31 / O/U 60.5**

Bama tries to justify its lofty preseason ranking with first year HC, Kalen DeBoer running the show. The fans in Tuscaloosa are as curious, as is the rest of the nation, if their new hire can pick up where Nick Saban left off. This game may not be the best barometer, but should give glimpses of this team's potential

**Pick: Alabama 43 Western Kentucky 10**

**Alabama A&M @ Auburn**

**Saturday, 6:30 p.m. / SECN+**  
**Line: Auburn -48 / O/U 56.5**

Auburn is a dark horse this year in the SEC. The Alabama A&M Bulldogs, an FCS cupcake out of the SWAC conference, went 5-6 in 2023. The Auburn Tigers won't go easy on their in-state little cousin.

**Pick: Auburn 57 Alabama A&M 6**  
**#7 Notre Dame @ #20 Texas A&M**  
**Saturday, 6:30 p.m. / ABC**  
**Line: Texas A&M -3 / O/U 46.5**

The Aggies are home team favorites against the AP Top 10 Irish. A&M is getting lots of love due to an almost intact returning offense at the skill positions. A win pushes new head coach Mike Elko into rarefied Aggie air.

**Pick: Texas A&M 24 Notre Dame 21**

**Southern Miss @ Kentucky**  
**Saturday, 6:45 p.m. / SECN**  
**Line: Kentucky -28 / O/U 50.5**

Kentucky will have to answer questions on both sides of the ball in their Kroger Field opener. The Golden Eagles of Southern Miss try to rebound from their 3-9 record last year.

**Pick: Kentucky 33 Southern Miss 17**

**#13 LSU vs. #23 USC**  
**Sunday, 6:30 p.m. / ABC**  
**Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas, NV**  
**Line: LSU 4 / O/U 63.5**

This battle in the desert will be a stern opener for both these storied programs. The winner can control its CFP fate, while the loser starts out behind the eight ball. LSU head coach Brian Kelly, has lost his opener the last two seasons. Defense wins this one.

**Pick: LSU 24 USC 20**

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# Big 12 Football Week 1 Matchups



## BIG 12 CONFERENCE

**Year Two of the Coach Prime era kicks off with an interesting matchup against North Dakota State, which may be the most interesting Big 12 game of Week 1**

*By Stacy Urban*

Week 1 of the college football season has arrived. This will be the first year without Oklahoma and Texas, which forces teams to step up and take their place. This year, the league now includes 16 teams after Arizona, Arizona State, Colorado, and Utah joined last month.

All 16 teams are playing nonconference games. TCU is the only team this week with a road game. West Virginia and TCU both play another Power 4 program.

UNLV is playing at Houston, and the Cougars are a 2.5-point favorite, which is the closest of any game this week. The largest spread of any game is Utah hosting Southern Utah, where Utah is a 38.5-point favorite.

**UCF vs. New Hampshire**  
**Thursday, 6 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: UCF -41.5 / 63**

The Knights play their first home game against New Hampshire, with their new quarterback K.J. Jefferson from Arkansas. Running backs R.J. Harvey and Penny Boone look to be a top running back duo this year, each having 1000+ rushing yards last season. UCF opened as +33.5-point favorite and should have an easy time over the Wildcats.

**Pick: UCF 48 New Hampshire 7**

**#22 Kansas vs. Lindenwood**  
**Thursday, 7 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: Kansas -45.5 / 58.5**

The Jayhawks could very well have another good start to the season. Their first test will be at West Virginia in Week 4. Going into the season, they keep star quarterback Jalon Daniels and look to be a contender for the Big 12 championship. They should cruise by Lindenwood.

**Pick: Kansas 56 Lindenwood 13**

**Colorado vs. North Dakota State**  
**Thursday, 7 p.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: Colorado -9.5 / 60.5**

Colorado looks to start off the season in

the Big 12 hot with a win over North Dakota State, a consistent FCS national championship contender. Coach Prime and his team look to build off a great off season transfer portal and recruitment work. Travis Hunter is coming back from his injury and will be a large factor in the outcome of the game. The Buffalos opened as a 9.5-point favorite.

**Pick: Colorado 37 ND State - 30**

**#12 Utah vs. Southern Utah**  
**Thursday, 8 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: Utah -38 / 53.5**

Utah is looking for its first win while in the Big 12 and looks to be the team to beat this season. They kept super senior quarterback Cam Rising, which should put the team in a great position. They open as 38.5 point-favorites over Southern Utah and should win this game.

**Pick: Utah 45 Southern Utah 14**

**TCU at Stanford**  
**Friday, 9:30 p.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: TCU -9.5 / 60**

Coach Dykes and his team travel to Palo Alto with the hopes of recreating the magic of the 2022 season. For Stanford, this will be their first game as part of the ACC, and they hope to start the year on a positive note after not winning a single home game last year. TCU is led by quarterback Josh Hoover who threw for over 300 yards in three of his last four games. TCU opened as an 11-point-favorite over Stanford.

**Pick: TCU 30 Stanford 28**

**#8 Penn State at West Virginia**  
**Saturday, 11:00 a.m. / Fox**  
**Line: Penn State -8 / 51.5**

Yikes! This is not a good way for the Mountaineers to start the year. The Mountaineers host the Nittany Lions to start the season. Then, in two weeks, they play in the Backyard Brawl in Pittsburgh, which looks to be an all-out slugfest. West Virginia looks to repeat and build on their success of last year, while Penn State is hoping to make the expanded playoffs.

Penn State should win this game in a convincing fashion, but Morgantown's advantage may help the Mountaineers pull off a huge upset.

**Pick: Penn State 27 West Virginia 24**

**#17 Oklahoma State vs. S.Dakota State**  
**Saturday, 1:00 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: Oklahoma State -9 / 54**

This could set the tone for the year. Oklahoma State's offseason has been stressful for head coach, Mike Gundy due to Ollie Gordon's off the field drama. The

Cowboys play Arkansas next week, which makes this game potentially a trap game due to the skill of the Jackrabbits. They hope to win the Big 12 this year after making the title game and losing to Texas, who left the conference this offseason. Oklahoma State opened as a 7-point favorite against the Jackrabbits.

**Pick: OSU 40 SDS 10**

**Cincinnati vs. Townson**  
**Saturday, 1:30 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: Cincinnati 30.5 / 53.5**

Cincinnati is coming off their worst season in the last five seasons, not only did they enter the Big 12 last year, but they also lost head coach, Luke Fickell who had previously led them to the CFP. The Bearcats are hoping to improve this year with second year head coach Scott Satterfield. They should win this week, but next week play Pittsburgh, who will not be a cake walk.

**Pick: Cincinnati 42 Townson 7**

**Iowa State vs. North Dakota**  
**Saturday, 2:30 p.m. / FS1**  
**Line: Iowa State 27 / 51.5**

Matt Campbell's squad is returning 19 starters after finishing last season 7-6. The Cyclones should breeze past this game and next week play No. 25 Iowa in the Cy-Hawk series.

**Pick: Iowa State 38 North Dakota 10**

**Baylor vs. Tarleton State**  
**Saturday, 6 p.m. / Big 12 Now on ESPN+**  
**Line: Baylor -26.5 / 55.5**

The Bears have a tough year ahead; they are at Utah, Colorado, Texas Tech, and West Virginia, all of which are either conference championship contenders or historically hard places to play. Baylor should win this game, but next week play Utah, which could easily make them see this game as an oversite. Tarleton State went 8-3 last season and could make this an interesting game. Dave Aranda is on the hot seat this year and must prove himself.

**Pick: Baylor 31 TSU 24**

**UNLV vs. Houston**  
**Saturday, 6 p.m. / FS1**  
**Line: Houston -2.5 / 54**

This off-season Houston hired a new head coach, Willie Fritz from Tulane. Fritz had great success in his last years at Tulane and hopes to turnaround the program. Fritz brought in a new offensive coordinator, Kevin Barbay, who was at Mississippi State last season. They should win this game but are in for a long season.

**Pick: Houston 30 UNLV 27**

**#18 Kansas State vs. UT Martin**  
**Saturday, 6 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: K-State 36 / 56.5**

This starts Kansas State journey to the Big 12 championship game, they won it two seasons ago but fell short last season. Will Howard transferred to The Ohio State, so Avery Johnson will need to step up at quarterback. They should win this game.

**Pick: Kansas State 40 UT Martin 6**

**Texas Tech vs. Abilene Christian**  
**Saturday, 6:30 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: Texas Tech -34 / 56.5**

The Red Raiders have 14 returning starters and look to be a dark horse candidate for the Big 12 Championship. Texas Tech should win this game with ease.

**Pick: Texas Tech 57 ACU 14**

**BYU vs. Southern Illinois**  
**Saturday, 7:00 p.m. / ESPN+**  
**Line: BYU -14 / 48.5**

Last year was BYU's first season in the Big 12, and it was a rude awakening. It was their worst season since 2017, and they look to bounce back, but they have a tough schedule. They should handily beat Southern Illinois, and they play an explosive SMU team next week. BYU is celebrating its 100th football season this year and hopes to do it with success!

**Pick: BYU 28 S. Illinois 14**

**#21 Arizona vs. New Mexico**  
**Saturday, 9:30 p.m. / ESPN**  
**Line: Arizona -30.5 / 59**

Welcome to late night football! With the addition of more West Coast teams, there should be a late night Big 12 game every week. Arizona is coming off their first ten-win season since 2014 and has high expectations this year. Quarterback Noah Fifita looks to keep improving after a fantastic Freshman season. Unfortunately for the Wildcats, Jedd Fisch left to coach for Washington. So, Brent Brennan has some large shoes to fill. Arizona should beat New Mexico, which brings New Mexico to 0-2, after their loss to Montana State.

**Pick: Arizona 42 New Mexico 20**

**Arizona State vs. Wyoming**  
**Saturday, 6:30 p.m. / CBS**  
**Line: Arizona State 7 / 47.5**

Arizona State is coming off back-to-back 3-9 seasons with second year head coach Kenny Dillingham. This is their first year in the Big 12 and they have a tough schedule slated for the year. They should win this game, but it will not be an easy game.

**Pick: Arizona State 24 Wyoming 21**



# This week: TOUR Championship



Defending champ Viktor Hovland is a fan of East Lake Golf Club

FedExCup.

**COURSE:** East Lake Golf Club, par 71, 7,490 yards. Every FedExCup champion (introduced in 2007) has been crowned at East Lake, the TOUR Championship's host venue since 2005. The home course of Bobby Jones, East Lake is the oldest golf course in the city of Atlanta. Tom Bendelow was the original architect, with both Donald Ross and Rees Jones contributing to the storied Atlanta layout; Andrew Green recently completed a substantial restoration. Another of Green's

(continued on page 8)

**TOUR Championship**  
**August 29 - September 1, 2024**  
**East Lake Golf Club**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Purse - \$100,000,000**  
**Winners Share - 25,000,000**  
**Defending Champ - Victor Hovland**

By Adam Stanley

It all comes down to this. The TOUR Championship, the final leg of the three-event FedExCup Playoffs, tees off Thursday at the recently restored East Lake Golf Club, with the TOUR's biggest prize still up for grabs. Scottie Scheffler once again returns to Atlanta as the top-ranked player in the FedExCup standings, with Xander Schauffele hot on his heels.

The Starting Strokes format gives Scheffler a two-shot advantage heading into Thursday's opening round at the TOUR Championship, starting the week at 10-under. Schauffele starts at 8-under, with all 30 players in the field starting at even par or better.

Regardless of the start, however, it's how you finish. And this week's top finisher will win the FedExCup.

**FIELD NOTES:** Scheffler will once again head to East Lake ranked No. 1 in the FedExCup standings after a fabulous 2024 campaign that includes six TOUR victories

and a gold medal at the Paris Olympics. This is the third straight year Scheffler has entered the PGA TOUR season finale ranked No. 1 in the standings ... Schauffele has authored his own tremendous campaign with two major titles to his name. He and Scheffler have separated themselves from the chasing pack on top of the FedExCup standings, as Schauffele is almost 1,500 points ahead of No. 3 Hideki Matsuyama .... Matsuyama won the FedEx St. Jude Championship but withdrew from the BMW Championship due to a back injury. He's set to return to action at East Lake ... Matsuyama was confirmed Sunday as the top-ranked member of the automatic qualifying group for the Presidents Cup's International Team, with three other automatic qualifiers (Sungjae Im, Adam Scott and Byeong Hun An) in the mix at the TOUR Championship. All six of the U.S. Team's automatic qualifiers – Scheffler, Schauffele, Collin Morikawa, Wyndham Clark, Patrick Cantlay and Sahith Theegala – have qualified for East Lake ... Rory McIlroy, at No. 6 in the standings, is looking to win his record fourth FedExCup title. He has finished outside the top 10 just once in the last seven years at East Lake.

**FEDEXCUP BUBBLE UPDATES:** Four players jumped into the top 30 on the

FedExCup standings after their efforts at the BMW Championship, led by winner Keegan Bradley, who was the last man into the BMW (No. 50) and vaulted to No. 4 in the standings into the TOUR Championship ... Adam Scott, who finished tied for second, jumped to No. 14 ... Tommy Fleetwood was on the bubble heading into the BMW Championship (at No. 31) but finished tied for fifth and moved to No. 22 ... Chris Kirk jumped from No. 32 to No. 26 ... Brian Harman, Jason Day, Davis Thompson and Denny McCarthy were the four that got bumped from the field at East Lake ... Justin Thomas heads to the TOUR Championship as the final player in the field at No. 30 in the standings.

**HOW IT WORKS:** The FedExCup Starting Strokes format rewards the top player in the FedExCup standings with a two-shot advantage Thursday at East Lake. For the second straight year, Scottie Scheffler starts on top at 10-under, while Xander Schauffele is at 8-under, Hideki Matsuyama is at 7-under, Keegan Bradley is at 6-under, Ludvig Åberg is at 5-under, and the balance of the field will span from 4-under to even-par.

**FEDEXCUP:** Winner receives the FedExCup.

**FEDEXCUP:** Winner receives the

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recent projects, the East Course at Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, New York, hosted the 2023 PGA Championship.

Green worked off an aerial photo of the course from 1949 along with archival photos, and the team reworked the entire course in just 10 months. Grasses for both fairways and greens were changed, while No. 14 was converted to a par 5.

**72-HOLE RECORD:** 257, Tiger Woods (2007)

**18-HOLE RECORD:** 60, Zach Johnson (Round 3, 2007)

**LAST TIME:** Hovland held off a hard-charging Schauffele with a final-round, 7-under 63 to cement a five-shot victory for the 2023 FedExCup. Schauffele and Hovland were paired in the final group Sunday at East Lake and fired the day's two lowest rounds, with Hovland's 63 the lowest Sunday score for a TOUR Championship winner. Hovland was the No. 2 seed going into the TOUR Championship, starting at 8-under. In Sunday's finale, Schauffele fired a front-nine 30 to Hovland's 31, but the Norwegian never let up and closed with three straight birdies to secure the FedExCup. It marked Hovland's third victory of the season, including the prior week's BMW Championship. Clark finished third at 16-under, while McIlroy finished fourth in his FedExCup defense and Cantlay finished fifth.

**HOW TO FOLLOW**  
(all time eastern)

- Thursday-Friday: 1-6 p.m. (Golf Channel)
  - Saturday: 1-2:30 p.m. (Golf Channel), 2:30-7 p.m. (NBC)
  - Sunday: noon-1:30 p.m. (Golf Channel), 1:30-6 p.m. (NBC)
- Special programming alerts:
- Payne Stewart Award Ceremony - Tune in live on Tuesday, Aug. 27, at 7 p.m. ET on Golf Channel to as nine-time TOUR winner Brandt Snedeker is honored as the latest recipient of the Payne Stewart Award.
  - PGA TOUR Live: On the Range - Tune in at 2:30 p.m. ET on Wednesday, Aug. 28, to catch all the live action straight from the practice range on at the 2024 TOUR Championship, featuring expert analysis, DraftKings betting and fantasy golf previews, player interviews and more at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.
  - 'The Creator Classic presented by Blackstone' - Tune in at 4 p.m. ET on Wednesday, Aug. 28, as 16 content creators compete in a nine-hole competition at East Lake Golf Club prior to the TOUR Championship.
- Radio on SiriusXM and free at PGA-TOUR.com/liveaudio:
- Thursday-Friday: noon-6 p.m.
  - Saturday: 2-7 p.m.
  - Sunday: 1-6 p.m.

# Power Rankings: TOUR Championship



The champion will be the golfer with the lowest score in relation to par including their starting strokes and 72-hole score

**All roads lead to this – the TOUR Championship**

By Staff

At the conclusion of this edition in Atlanta, the 18th FedExCup champion will be determined. Drawing a parallel in golf parlance, the era will have completed a full round, so it's as appropriate to appreciate that the host, East Lake Golf Club, has come full circle as its revival is making its debut.

Beneath this traditional full-field Power Rankings for the finale of the FedExCup Playoffs are details of the tournament format, what's at stake, how East Lake will present and much more.

Rank	Players	Comment
30	Robert MacIntyre	2-under

The sore lower back that forced the inspirational lefty from Scotland to withdraw during the third round of the BMW Championship cost him eight seeds (to 20th) but only one stroke on the opening leaderboard.

**29 Matthieu Pavon 1-under**

The only PGA TOUR rookie to make it to East Lake, the Frenchman has scuffled more often than he's thrived of late. However, because he's been a man for the moment in the last 10 months, he's a classic wild card.

**28 Sahith Theegala 3-under**

Inconsistency has dogged this cat, but only in the short-term. In scattering seven top 10s, his long-range form has delivered, but the only qualifier sans a top 35-finish

in this Playoffs, and neither were top 45s.

**27 Byeong Hun An 2-under**

His debut is the culmination of three years of resetting not only for what it takes to stay on the PGA TOUR but also what it requires to be among the best. Of the three non-winners in the field, he's highest-seeded at 16th.

**26 Akshay Bhatia 2-under**

At just 22 years of age, the first-timer is the youngest in the field, but as much as it may seem that he's outpacing the learning curve, the lefty is right where he belongs. Superbly balanced throughout his bag.

**25 Christiaan Bezuidenhout Even**

One of three PGA TOUR non-winners in the field, he skipped along the top 30 in the FedExCup like an expertly slung stone across the surface of a placid body of water, which is ironic given his firepower. Debutant.

**24 Chris Kirk Even**

Never mind the pressure to qualify, how about the stress not to squander it? That was his reality as the winner of The Sentry to open 2024. He rallied with a T9 at the BMW to reenter the bubble. First finale in 10 years.

**23 Aaron Rai Even par**

His forward progress toward his East Lake debut was a satisfying as any successful two-minute drill to win a football game. The Englishman figures to make noise with his world-class ball-striking feeding red-hot form.

**22 Taylor Pendrith 1-under**

Magic can happen when multiple goals are presented to a professional ready for it.

For the first-timer at East Lake, the special layer of the Presidents Cup is in his native Canada no doubt fueled a four-month surge.

**21 Shane Lowry 3-under**

Of those in their first appearance, his hits most like a factual error because the 37-year-old has accomplished so much. In fact, he had opened two previous Playoffs inside the top 30, only to tumble out (in 2019 and 2022).

**20 Tom Hoge Even par**

The TOUR's leader in red numbers (58) signed for four of them in his only previous try at East Lake in 2022 when he rose from his opening position of T21 (at 1-under) to 10th. Irons were locked in for a T13 last week.

**19 Billy Horschel 1-under**

The 37-year-old is enjoying an extended prime as much as the positive impact of a well-timed burst of form since a co-runner-up at The Open Championship. Also a former winner at East Lake, albeit 10 years ago.

**18 Justin Thomas Even par**

What a difference a year makes. After finishing just outside the bubble of the 2023 FedExCup Playoffs, he's the last man inside it at this year's finale. No matter the format, his worst finish at East Lake is T7 (2018).

**17 Viktor Hovland 2-under**

Proof that it's a long season, he hit for only one top 10 until a T2 at the FedEx St. Jude Championship promised a fifth straight start at East Lake and the opportunity to become the first to win consecutive FedExCups.

**16 Tommy Fleetwood 1-under**

Opening the Playoffs as the 32-seed, it'd have been an upset if the silver medalist didn't crash the party in Atlanta, but he still needed a T5 at Castle Pines to secure his fourth appearance. As locked in as anyone.

**15 Adam Scott 3-under**

The 44-year-old Aussie thrust his way into his 13th appearance at East Lake, all since the course has been the only host since 2004. On the bounce of a T2 at Castle Pines where his second-round 63 was a field low.

**14 Sepp Straka 1-under**

This is the big fella's third straight trip to the TOUR Championship but it's his first on similarly broad shoulders of consistently strong form that's defined this season. His scoring average in eight rounds here is 67.38.

**13 Russell Henley 2-under**

He's made the most out of what's been an economical schedule consisting of only 18 starts, but one-third of them went for a top 10 and another four for top 25s, including a T22 at the BMW Championship. Always a threat.



**12 Hideki Matsuyama 7-under**

Obviously couldn't gain ground once he decided to withdraw after one round at Castle Pines, but he didn't lose any, either. The unintentionally calculated rest follows the bronze medal and victory at TPC Southwind.

**11 Collin Morikaw 4-under**

Relative to his expectations, he's been uncharacteristically quiet for four straight starts upon arrival. It's a reflection of a regression with the irons, which is startling given his profile. Opened with 61 here last year.

**10 Ludvig Åberg 5-under**

Continues to crush debuts. The precocious Swede just recorded his third runner-up finish of the year at the BMW Championship. It piles on as his fifth top five, so he's the highest-seeded non-winner this season.

**9 Keegan Bradley 6-under**

Having his cake and eating it, too, he vaulted from 50th to fourth in the FedExCup with Sunday's victory at Castle Pines. Returns to East Lake to avenge last year's T9. He was T1 after opening at 3-under and with a 63.

**8 Wyndham Clark 4-under**

Settled for a T13 with a Sunday 74 at home last week, but it's the latest evidence of impressive work of the last two months consisting of five top 15s. Same opening position in debut here last year en route to solo third.

**7 Rory McIlroy 4-under**

The only two-time FedExCup champ since Starting Strokes was introduced opened his titles at 5-under (2019) and 4-under (2022), respectively, so this is a familiar slot. It's been a frustrating series this time, however.

**6 Patrick Cantlay 4-under**

Opens in the same position as last year's TOUR Championship when he placed fifth. The 2021 FedExCup champion averaged 67.67 across his last 12 rounds at East Lake. Arrives this time with six straight top 25s in tow.

**5 Tony Finau 3-under**

Only Xander Schauffele can match Finau's active streak of eight straight starts at East Lake. Finau's season has been a master class in contending and consistency, without a victory. A relative dark horse.

**4 Sungjae Im 3-under**

The 26-year-old from South Korea has been a force in earnest for four months. Now in his sixth appearance, he's never not qualified for the TOUR Championship. Opened the 2022 edition in 4-under and finished T2.

**3 Sam Burns 4-under**

He's fired on all cylinders en route to a respective T5 and T2 in the Playoffs in which he's second in Strokes Gained: Putting, T2 in par-3 scoring, third in par-4 scoring and first in converting greens hit into par breakers.

**2 Scottie Scheffler 10-under**

It must feel strange to defend a sizable long-term lead while competing for a title

in the short-term. His T33 at Castle Pines didn't cost him position, but no one has responded more favorably to adversity this season.

**1 Xander Schauffele 8-under**

He has Scottie Scheffler right where he wants him. Since Schauffele was my pick to win his first FedExCup, he's gone T2-T5. His scoring average at East Lake in 20 rounds in the Starting Strokes era is 66.60.

Last week's notion of the neutral field at Castle Pines Golf Club rewarded as it projected – a proven ball-striker in Keegan Bradley. He prevailed at the BMW Championship by one stroke despite giving back 1.69 of them to the field with his putter. He covered with his tee-to-green game, but that's the kind of possibility that plays up when greens are unfamiliar.

Although East Lake is not a stranger, the greens are brand new. In fact, the whole course is mint. It's fresh off a full restoration guided by architect Andrew Green. Among the litany of his acclaimed recent works is Oak Hill Country Club, which hosted the 2023 PGA Championship. Green leaned on a photo of East Lake from 1949 to bring back to life what Donald Ross had created prior to that. In addition to a transformation to TifEagle Bermuda putting surfaces, Green built new bunkers, moved others and removed trees. So, despite the fact that nine golfers in the field are first-timers, all 30 begin as relative first-timers in the opening round.

Save an unprecedented aerial assault on flag sticks, Bradley's formula for success won't carry over as well if for no other reason than it opens with a staggered leaderboard for the sixth consecutive edition. The FedExCup champion will be the golfer who records the lowest score in relation to par with the combination of his FedExCup Starting Strokes and 72-hole score at East Lake.

Since FedExCup Starting Strokes debuted in 2019, two winners held serve as the top seed – Dustin Johnson in 2020 and Patrick Cantlay in 2021. Of the other three, Rory McIlroy started furthest back as the 7-seed at 4-under. With a runner-up in the TOUR Championship, Xander Schauffele owns the distinction of the best finish from a starting position outside the top 10, and he's done it twice – first as the 14-seed for a T2 in 2020, and then again last year as the 15-seed for a solo second.

Viktor Hovland opened as the 2-seed last year and piggybacked his win at the BMW Championship with another at the TOUR Championship. He became the 12th golfer in Playoffs history to win multiple times in the same Playoffs and the eighth to win consecutive tournaments in the series.

East Lake yielded a scoring average of 68.758 a year ago, but that went into the books as the last time it tested as a stock par 70. It's now a par 71 because the 14th hole has been stretched 60 yards to play as a 580-yard par 5. Scoring in the aggregate will rise, but a third par 5 could generate

more churn on the leaderboard. The other two par 5s tied for the easiest sets among 58 courses played throughout the 2022-23 season. Nos. 6 and 18 averaged just 4.36.

Today, East Lake tips at 7,490 yards. That's 144 yards longer than before Green and his team went to work, but the targets that average more than 6,200 square feet are about 11 percent greater in area with noticeable variances from hole to hole. Until now, perhaps the most striking change in recent years was when the nines were reversed in 2016. Also included in the new array of visuals is a lowered green at the par-3 ninth hole and a restored linear bunker that bisects the fairway on the par-4 17th. Drives that find it may evoke the thought of a gutter ball in bowling.

A perfect game isn't required to prevail, however. Whoever manages his the best in

conjunction with his opening position will be rewarded with \$25 million, an official PGA TOUR victory and a five-year PGA TOUR membership extension. For merely qualifying for the TOUR Championship, all others are granted exemptions into the 2025 editions of the Masters, the U.S. Open and The Open Championship. And if a golfer isn't yet exempt through 2026, his membership exemption will be extended through that season.

It's still summer in the South, so afternoon storms cannot be ruled out once players are deep into their second rounds. If a delay (or plural) is needed, the small field caters to staying on schedule much better than usual. Otherwise classically warm and humid conditions will blanket the property. Wind will not be a factor.

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# East Lake: Everything old is new again



The eighth hole was turned into a short (and potentially drivable) par 4

## ***Club's restoration, which will be unveiled at this week's TOUR Championship, harkens to proud history***

It was a dreary winter day when Chad Parker led Andrew Green into the basement of East Lake Golf Club's clubhouse. Green was making one of his first visits to the club, but before he did any digging in the dirt, he wanted to sift through the club's extensive archives.

Parker, East Lake's president and general manager, gave Green a quick tour before returning to his office and the duties of his day job. Hours later, as Parker prepared to leave for the day, he realized that the man charged with bringing East Lake's prolific history back to life was still underground, immersed in the details of the club's storied past. Parker made sure to grab Green some sustenance before packing up, as Green's passion for his work had led him to overlook his most basic needs.

"I just realized, This guy hasn't eaten all day; how can I be hospitable and help him out?" Parker said. "I don't know how long he was in there. I left and told the guard, 'When that car's gone, you can lock the building up.'"

Green is one of today's top architects

thanks in large part to the work he's done restoring other Donald Ross classics like Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, and Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, New York, site of last year's PGA Championship. Green calls East Lake an "amazing oasis of history," and his efforts to return the club to its roots will be unveiled at this week's TOUR Championship.

The top 30 in the FedExCup will be among the first to play a course that looks dramatically different than it did 12 months ago. Green's restoration harkens back to East Lake's golden age, when champions like Bobby Jones and Alexa Stirling were roaming the grounds, while promoting more compelling competition for the best players of today.

"We wanted to make sure we created extra opportunities for exciting golf," Green said.

What once was a one-dimensional test will now promote more variance in scoring and will challenge players in a variety of ways.

Circular putting surfaces with steep back-to-front slope have been replaced by greens with unique slopes and shapes.

Players will need to decide if they're brave

enough to attack pins set on plateaus and small fingers protruding from the greens.

Some putting surfaces, like on Nos. 5 and 6, have been moved to give holes more character and curve. The bunkers have a classic look, with Green restoring the grass-faced traps that were more common in Ross' day.

Instead of being pushed to the edges of the fairways, ready to catch wayward shots, the traps are cut into the landing areas, forcing players to decide if they'll play over, around or short of the sand. There is more movement in the fairways, as well, and added humps and hollows.

"I think there's a lot more variety around the course and a lot more decision making," said eight-time PGA TOUR winner Stewart Cink, an East Lake member. "Golf is a complex sport and there's some complexity around the golf course that you have to deal with. Decision making is going to be rewarded."

The eighth hole was turned into a short (and potentially drivable) par 4 to add excitement as players near the turn. And No. 14, once a long par 4, has been stretched into a par 5. Views of the course's namesake body of water and the Atlanta

skyline also were restored throughout the course.

When the club went searching for an architect to bring back the course's earlier look, it didn't take long to realize Green was the man for the job. Parker recalls their introductory phone call, which he expected to last five minutes, stretching for 45 instead. Green already was well-versed in Ross' work and understood East Lake's place in the game, both as the venue for the TOUR Championship and the catalyst for change in an East Lake community that was once riddled with crime and drug use. East Lake is now a shining example for the "purpose-built communities" model that has transformed cities across the country.

"We're constantly evolving in terms of who we are, but we also remember who we were in the past and what happened here," said Parker, who calls the club "historic but progressive." The same could be said of Green, whose work has produced courses with a classic look that still challenge modern players. An ardent student of history, he also listened to rap artists like Ludacris and Outkast while shaping East Lake's greens, continuing his tradition of using local artists for auditory inspiration.





Views of the course's namesake body of water and the Atlanta skyline also were restored throughout the course

As his extended basement session suggests, Green has a reputation as a voracious researcher, using historic documents to drive his work. The original documentation for Ross' design, though, was likely lost in a fire that destroyed East Lake's clubhouse in 1925. That sent Green looking for other resources.

Century-old newspaper articles and the writings of Jones' biographer, O.B. Keeler, were crucial, offering accounts of strokes that Jones played on the course. Keeler's description of a heroic shot Jones played from a "chasm" right of the 16th green led Green to build a steep drop-off there.

He also did extensive interviews with Tom Cousins, the man credited with resuscitating East Lake in the early 1990s, and Charlie Harrison, another of East Lake's great amateurs who played alongside Jones. Harrison recalled that the bunker short of the par-3 11th was the deepest on the course, inspiring Green to revive the punishing pit.

The driving document for Green's work was a 1949 aerial of the course, one that Green uncovered by scouring government databases.

"The photo was almost high-definition quality, incredibly sharp," said Green. "You could blow it up and really see a lot of detail."

He's found that the years following World War II offer some of the best aerials, likely because of tactics and technology refined during the war. That was the case

with this crisp photograph from the air above East Lake, which helped guide Green's decision-making. (Eventually such photos were replaced by satellite imagery, which isn't nearly as crisp.)

The photo of East Lake not only showed the state of the course in the middle of the 20th century but also the remnants of features that had been buried with the passage of time. The Great Depression muted many courses' most distinct features because of the cost to maintain them, but the photo showed details like the scar of a road that used to run through the course, plus a trench bunker on the 17th hole that was a remnant from Civil War encampments. Green restored that, creating a long, narrow

trap that bisects the hole.

The East Lake preserved in that photo still had a lot of the original Ross features, but it was about to undergo several changes. George Cobb renovated the course to make it more challenging for the 1963 Ryder Cup. Then, as the surrounding neighborhood declined in the ensuing decades, so did the club. Cousins devised a plan to resuscitate it, bringing in Rees Jones to breathe life back into the course. What remained was a course that was challenging enough to host the TOUR Championship but also had become repetitive and predictable, a series of straight fairways and circular greens devoid of identifying features. The front nine ran up and down the hillside above the lake. The back nine offered little more variety, even if it benefitted from more recognizable holes like the island-green 15th and the par-5 18th.

The aerial photograph from 1949, combined with on-the-ground photography shot before the pre-Ryder Cup renovations, gave Green a good sense of the old East Lake, but it also gave him room for his own interpretation. The old eighth green ran back up the hill, away from the lake, but he created a short par 4 with a green flush against the water and several strategically placed traps that will require deft navigation to avoid. The green also was moved closer to the tee.

The East Lake of 1949 showed two greens on each hole, one Bermudagrass surface for warm weather and another built with a cool-weather grass. Sometimes the greens were adjacent to each other. On other holes, they were set far apart. Building two greens with two grasses wasn't an option for Green, but he designed putting surfaces that paid homage to that history and bisected several of the new greens with ridges.

The first hole used to have a green flush against Alston Drive, which borders the course. While it wouldn't be wise to build a green that close to a road today, Green designed a two-level putting surface with a small bunker in front to emulate the pair of putting surfaces that used to be on the hole.

The next hole offers an even more dramatic example. The green in the aerial photo is shaped like a diamond because the two putting surfaces are triangles pointing in opposite directions. Green recreated that shape and ran a ridge through the middle of the green.

It illustrates how the new greens will introduce a wider range of scores.

When the hole is placed in the front-left, players can use the ridge to funnel shots toward the target. Flags on the back of the green will be protected by that ridge, requiring players to take an aerial approach to that back plateau. They'll have a smaller landing area to access that hole location, and the short grass at the rear of the green could send off-target shots even farther away from the flag.

"The old East Lake, the ball's not rolling anywhere," Parker said. "The golf course is going to play more extreme because of the roll."

Adding short grass around the putting surfaces is another way Green hopes to increase variability in the scoring. It not only gives players more options for recovery shots, but it also requires them to put more thought into their approach shots by increasing the penalty for straying from their target. East Lake's prior iteration – with back-to-front sloping greens and thick rough – meant balls wouldn't travel far from their landing spot.

In that vein, the lone bunker was removed from East Lake's most famous green, the island 15th. The putting surface is now shaped like a mitten, with the left bunker replaced by a chipping area behind the green. There's no more sand to serve as a soft landing spot for wayward shots. Instead, the slope behind the green could repel shots into the water. Green said the putting surface now looks even more intimidating than before.

"Eliminating the bunker makes it feel like there's not a place to miss," he said. "It's either green or hazard. The back of 15 and the shape of the green is very reminiscent of its history."

It's another example of how East Lake is moving forward by going back in time.

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Marker's Notes										

Player \_\_\_\_\_

Tee \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Round \_\_\_\_\_

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Yards	510	205	415	465	450	525	495	390	260	3715
Par	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	35
Score										

MARKER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE

FedEx PLAYOFFS

2024 Official Scorecard

TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP East Lake Golf Club

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	TOTAL

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	TOTAL
425	225	390	450	580	215	460	445	585	3775	7490
4	3	4	4	5	3	4	4	5	36	71

PLAYER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_



# 2024 NFL football season predictions



Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott has won 12 games in three straight years

By Will Brinson

The Brinson Model™ returns! After a reasonably triumphant year for my full-season win-loss projections, we're back for another season of trying to nail every single NFL team's record correctly.

Looking back on last season is a harsh reminder of how hard it is to actually predict exact NFL team records. After all, this is a game played with an inflated, oblong piece of big butt that loves to bounce around randomly and create total chaos over a relatively short sample size.

I hit just three teams (49ers, Seahawks, Titans) exactly, but had another 10 within one game of their exact win total, another five within two games and another eight within three games. My average differential was 2.25 while the mean differential for all of my picks was an even two games.

The biggest mistake I made was essentially flipping Carolina and the Bucs.

Whoops! The Browns and Bengals QB situations and end results created an eight-game swing for me as well. I was much, much higher on the Texans than the market and still didn't give them enough credit. Same for the Rams. I was much lower than the market on the Chargers but somehow not low enough! On the other hand, my Patriots projection was humiliating in hindsight.

**Arizona Cardinals**

**Win total: 6.5 (over -150)**

**Projected record: 7-10**

The Cardinals seem to have somehow become a consensus fun/frisky team for 2024. Kyler Murray flashed some upside last year in this intriguing offense, and after floating in purgatory last offseason, the Cards firmly committed to their QB this offseason, doubling down and getting him Marvin Harrison Jr. as an elite WR to pair with Trey McBride. Michael Wilson and Greg Dortch are suddenly nice little secondary weapons in this offense.

Jonathan Gannon's intro presser experience gave a lot of people reasonable pause about the coaching in Arizona, but maybe he's just a Nick Sirriani clone but on defense, as the coaching was strong in Arizona last year. This is still a rebuilding project, especially in a really tough division, but it wouldn't shock me if the Cards were in the playoff hunt late, especially if the defense takes any kind of step forward.

**Atlanta Falcons**

**Win total: 9.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 10-7**

It's hard not to be excited about the Falcons this year. Last year's team was a lot of frustration, with the top-10 offensive weapons on the roster largely underused. Now Zac Robinson comes to town along with pricey free agent Kirk Cousins, and you can hear the excitement when guys like Drake London and Bijan Robinson talk about this offense. Kyle Pitts should be in line for the season everyone's been waiting on as well. The only way this offense

fails is a Cousins injury, and Atlanta drafted Michael Penix Jr. eighth overall, giving it some insurance on that front. There's nothing wrong with questioning the defensive chops here, especially after passing on a first-round pass rusher for Penix, but I trust Raheem Morris to get the most out of this unit. He's been an excellent coordinator in his career, and there are some similarities to the Rams on this defensive roster.

**Baltimore Ravens**

**Win total: 10.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 12-5**

There are lots of people projecting a lot of regression for the Ravens this year, in large part due to free agency attrition, as well as the departure of defensive coordinator Mike Macdonald. There's major, and viable, concern with the offensive line in front of Lamar Jackson as well. But I think Baltimore ends up being a fairly steady team that will "surprise" some people. Zach Orr takes over as defensive coordinator. He's highly thought of and should be able to minimize the drop-off from Macdonald. More concerning is the departure of guys like Patrick Queen and Geno Stone, particularly since those two left for division rivals in free agency. Offensively this team could take a leap forward off of Jackson's second MVP season. It's his second year in Todd Monken's system and it feels like his weapons could be improved. Zay Flowers is in his second year, the team is really high on Rashod Bateman, and the

duel combo of Mark Andrews/Isaiah Likely is pretty strong. The offensive linemen were all drafted in house, and the Ravens are excellent at drafting and developing, so I think it may be less of a problem than people think.

**Buffalo Bills**

**Win total: 10.5 (under -155)**

**Projected record: 10-7**

Josh Allen is my MVP pick this year, and part of that is him having a division-winning, toss-the-team-on-my-back season after the Bills traded Stefon Diggs this offseason. The narrative here is the Bills will crater and people seem to be rooting against them. I'm not totally sold on Joe Brady as an OC, but I think his play-calling fits with these weapons: he's going to feed James Cook and continue to run Allen in the red zone. The combo of Keon Coleman, Curtis Samuel and Khalil Shakir with the potential for a massive breakout from Dalton Kincaid gives this offense a lot more upside than people are giving it credit for. Sean McDermott's noted this might be the best OL of his tenure in Buffalo. I'm buying the dip. The Bills defensively have some pass rush concerns and are in the middle of changing over personnel, but I still trust McDermott to get the most out of this group. Von Miller needs to be a much bigger plus than last year.

**Carolina Panthers**

**Win total: 5.5 (over -115)**

**Projected record: 6-11**

What could go wrong??? After being high on Carolina last year and being SO wrong, I'm back to being a little more bullish on the Panthers once again. There's several underlying statistical reasons (a bad record in one-score games and their point differential last year) to believe they can win more games in 2024. But you can also point to coaching -- Dave Canales is an unknown, but the coaching staff is at least all on the same page now -- which is an upgrade for Carolina. It's going to run the heck out of the ball this season, which will accentuate the strength of the offensive linemen on this roster and minimize the exposure of Bryce Young to tons of pass rush pressures. Getting Diontae Johnson via trade and drafting Xavier Legette in the first round automatically means the Panthers have upgraded the skill guys. Losing Brian Burns is brutal for the defense, but there's enough talent on that defense, but there's enough talent on that-side of the ball for Carolina to hang around in games and steal some wins.



## Chicago Bears

**Win total: 8.5 (over -165)**

**Projected record: 8-9**

The annual hype surrounding the Bears is building to its normal outrageous levels, but -- insert Tobias Fünke meme here -- maybe this is actually the year when we should be buying in. Caleb Williams has massive upside as a rookie, and he landed in one of the better landing spots for a young quarterback, with the Bears adding Keenan Allen (trade) and Rome Odunze (draft) to D.J. Moore and Cole Kmet. D'Andre Swift was a sneaky free agency addition who gives Williams another outlet option. The offensive line is probably the best Chicago's had in a few years. Can Matt Eberflus carry over the late-season defensive production into 2024? Once the Bears acquired Montez Sweat in a midseason trade, things really seemed to take off. If that's the case, I might be underselling them here. They definitely qualify as a sleeper playoff team in the NFC.

## Cincinnati Bengals

**Win total: 10.5 (over -140)**

**Projected record: 11-6**

The bull case for the Bengals is pretty obvious: positive regression in terms of quarterback health. Joe Burrow's borderline "injury prone" at this point, but maybe that blonde wig he showed up to training camp with will ward off the evil injury spirits. Ja'Marr Chase isn't practicing because of a contract situation, but I expect him to be full go. Tee Higgins isn't happy about his tag, but he's going to play. Zack Moss and Chase Brown may be a sneaky massive upgrade for Cincy at running back. The loss of OC Brian Callahan is certainly a concern, but I think Zac Taylor -- who was calling plays anyway -- and Burrow at QB will be able to patch that problem fairly handily. Defensively the Bengals were dead last in yards per play allowed last season. I anticipate an improvement there, even with D.J. Reader out the door. Sheldon Rankins will help fill that void, and bringing back Geno Stone from a division rival should help the back end of this defense in a big way.

## Cleveland Browns

**Win total: 8.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 7-10**

I had the Browns on my list of seven teams who could miss the postseason in 2024 and, quite naturally, Browns fans are thrilled. Defensively, I'm a little concerned about Cleveland repeating its performance last year. Jim Schwartz is one of my fave defensive coordinators (can we please get him and Harbaugh 2.0?), but the Browns were very up and down in terms of their performance depending on home/road splits. That's a red flag. On the other side of the ball, their biggest loss may be OL coach Bill Callahan, who joined his son Brian in Tennessee. Mix in an unknown timeline for Nick Chubb, and I think you can make the case this top-tier rushing offense could fall off a cliff. D'Onta Foreman, their short-yardage back, suffered

a scary injury in training camp, too. Things are getting thin at running back already. How can anyone possibly suggest Deshaun Watson will be good again? We haven't seen it in more than three years. Maybe a new Kevin Stefanski throw-heavy system, plus the addition of Jerry Jeudy, will help Watson get his performance level back up, but I think Stefanski would prefer having Baker Mayfield still on the team given his system. There's just a lot of unknown here and it revolves around Watson.

## Dallas Cowboys

**Win total: 10.5 (under -180)**

**Projected record: 11-6**

The range of outcomes for the Cowboys this year is pretty wide, as you can tell by me having them on my "might miss the playoffs" list and simultaneously putting them down for 11 wins in The Brinson Model™. I actually have them starting pretty slow out of the gate, going just .500 over their first six weeks before catching fire thanks to a fairly friendly schedule featuring lots of home games in the second half. If the offensive line doesn't fall apart, I trust Mike McCarthy to get the most out of Dak Prescott. The playoffs might be a problem, but he's won 12 games in three straight years. CeeDee Lamb is gonna play even if it's on a lame-duck deal. Brandin Cooks is a decent No. 2 option, Jake Ferguson is a semi-sneaky potential breakout candidate this year, and the running back room with Rico Dowdle may be better than anyone expects. My biggest concern is the defense with Dan Quinn gone, but Mr. Zimmer has enough options on that side of the ball for a reclamation project.

## Denver Broncos

**Win total: 5.5 (under -125)**

**Projected record: 7-10**

I found myself a little surprised to be so low on the Broncos this year considering my affinity for Sean Payton as a coach. It's mostly a byproduct of a really difficult division and the total unknown of the quarterback position in Denver. Bo Nix kind of HAS to play after being taken 12th overall this year, right? If he doesn't, it's a huge red flag. Javonte Williams is going to really surprise some folks, I think, and if they can block up front, he could have a massive year. The receiver group is a little concerning, and I'm not entirely sure how great the defense is going to be, either. But I also think it's easy to forget the Broncos actually won eight games last year and nearly got involved in the playoff hunt late. If they went 9-8 and Nix was a star because Payton is an incredible quarterback coach and offensive mind, I wouldn't be surprised at all.

## Detroit Lions

**Win total: 10.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 11-6**

Do the Lions have the best top-to-bottom roster in the NFL now? Brad Holmes and Dan Campbell have done an incredible job building out this Lions team to the point it would be shocking if the Lions didn't make the postseason this year. Jared

Goff and this offense play three games all year long outdoors -- yes, three total games outdoors. This could be fireworks, especially if Jameson Williams makes the strides Campbell indicates he could. Jahmyr Gibbs is lining up in the slot a bunch during camp, meaning we could get he and David Montgomery on the field together a ton. Amon-Ra St. Brown and Sam LaPorta are studs. The biggest concern for the offensive output here would be the defense taking a big step forward, especially on the back end. Detroit's front seven looks strong, but the secondary gave up a ton of pass yards last year, causing Detroit to invest. That may be bad for fantasy but won't matter one lick for the Lions being a really great football team.

## Green Bay Packers

**Win total: 9.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 10-7**

Another team with a massive range of outcomes depending on what the Packers get from Jordan Love this year. As I've noted plenty of times, Love was a borderline starter for the first half of the season last year and a unanimous MVP level player the second half of the season. He's got piles of weapons this year and a brand new contract, so expectations should be high. The early-season schedule isn't "easy" and starting the season in Brazil is very unusual, but it wouldn't be shocking if the Pack got off to a hot start and kept it rolling for much of the season. I'm bullish on Love with all his different weapons, especially so if Christian Watson stays healthy this season. The defense should be upgraded in large part because of Jeff Hafley joining on as defensive coordinator.

## Houston Texans

**Win total: 9.5 (over -140)**

**Projected record: 10-7**

The sky is the limit for Houston, but the expectations could be a problem here. C.J. Stroud is the second favorite MVP candidate in the entire NFL. Adding Stefon Diggs to Tank Dell and Nico Collins is just fun and Joe Mixon could fit what this offense does well. It's hard to question the defense because of DeMeco Ryans' chops as a coach and because of his success everywhere he's been. They also added Danielle Hunter as a pass-rush option and Kamari Lassiter in the secondary, with both guys getting good buzz this offseason. If Lassiter is a stud and Derek Stingley Jr. keeps developing, that is one filthy combo. My biggest concerns are honestly just the hype and the division: the Texans may just be ready to deliver on the former, and even

if they don't max out their potential, they could still take home the AFC South crown.

## Indianapolis Colts

**Win total: 8.5 (under -125)**

**Projected record: 8-9**

Another team with a crazy level of variation and, naturally, it revolves around Anthony Richardson. If you told me AR played five games and the Colts struggled this season I'd buy it. If you told me AR won MVP this season and the Colts were a 12-win powerhouse, I'd buy that too. I don't want to peg Richardson as an injury-prone guy one year into his career, but he got banged up a lot and it happened early. Still, there's a lot to like here. Shane Steichen is a really good offensive coach, and it sounds like this team will want to play fast. Michael Pittman is signed and AD Mitchell is in the mix via the draft, along with Josh Downs, Alec Pierce and some fun tight end pieces. The offensive line needs to get back to where it was a few years ago and keep Richardson upright.

## Jacksonville Jaguars

**Win total: 8.5 (over/under -110)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

The margins are going to be snug in a really tough AFC South. The Jaguars were the Texans this time last year, with Trevor Lawrence getting MVP hype and the Jags being considered a legit Super Bowl contender. They didn't even make the postseason after collapsing down the stretch, but Lawrence was a lot more hurt than people realized. If he's healthy this year, the offense should be substantially better, particularly with the addition of Gabe Davis in free agency and Brian Thomas Jr. as a first-round pick. Defensively, the Arik Armstead signing was massive in the moment but is maybe flying under the radar as we head into the season. Add in Darnell Savage and they have five former first-round picks on the defense. It's time for this unit to produce, and the addition of Ryan Nielsen as DC could be the jolt it needs.

## Kansas City Chiefs

**Win total: 11.5 (over -115)**

**Projected record: 12-5**

The unfathomable finally happened in 2023: The Chiefs went under their win total for the first time since Andy Reid took over in Kansas City way back in 2013. And they promptly won the division and then won the Super Bowl. Naturally. Now KC is trying for a three-peat, and in order to bolster the offense, Reid and GM Brett Veach added Hollywood Brown in

*(continued on page 14)*

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free agency and Xavier Worthy in the first round of the draft. Patrick Mahomes now has some actual vertical threats who will pair perfectly with Travis Kelce and Rashee Rice eating up underneath. Losing L'Jarius Sneed on defense hurts for sure, but this unit has quietly been awesome the last few years and shouldn't drop off much. Steve Spagnuolo deserves a ton of credit for helping develop some excellent young picks, and Veach as well for finding it and retaining most of it. I could see the Chiefs not putting their foot on the gas all season to save up for the playoffs. Or maybe they just bash everyone on offense to let people know. Lawrence was a lot more hurt than people realized. If he's healthy this year, the offense should be substantially better,

particularly with the addition of Gabe Davis in free agency and Brian Thomas Jr. as a first-round pick. Defensively, the Arik Armstead signing was massive in the moment but is maybe flying under the radar as we head into the season. Add in Darnell Savage and they have five former first-round picks on the defense. It's time for this unit to produce, and the addition of Ryan Nielsen as DC could be the jolt it needs.

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#### **Los Angeles Rams**

**Win total: 8.5 (over -155)**

**Projected record: 12-5**

Would you say I'm bullish on the Rams this year??? I think Matthew Stafford is set to have an incredible year, maybe more efficient than volume-based, thanks to the offseason upgrades Los Angeles made on offense. L.A. beefed up the run game on the interior by adding Jonah Jackson and Kevin Dotson. Colby Parkinson is one of the sneakiest additions in free agency and gives the team some fun athleticism at tight end with Tyler Higbee coming back from injury. Puka Nacua's preseason injury is a

concern, but Cooper Kupp should be completely healthy to start the year and DeMarcus Robinson sets up as a really underrated third receiver in 11 personnel. Blake Corum is a perfect compliment to Kyren Williams. I have massive expectations for this offense --especially when it'll need to score more points to make up for a slightly worse defense after losing Aaron Donald and Raheem Morris. I do love adding Jared Verse and Braden Fiske as a combo to replace the former.

#### **Los Angeles Chargers**

**Win total: 8.5 (over -150)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

The Justin Herbert plantar injury could throw this whole division, and certainly this team, into complete flux. If Herbert's healthy, I like the Chargers as a sneaky playoff team. Jim Harbaugh just wins, and he set this team up in his image early. Greg Roman's run game behind this offensive line -- chockfull of early draft picks -- should produce enough to let Herbert and Josh Palmer/Ladd McConkey move the chains when they need to. And the defense didn't lose anyone in the salary cap purge this offseason, meaning Harbs should be able to get the most out of what he inherited. The Harbaugh Bros don't miss much when it comes to bringing in coordinators, and we've already seen Jesse Minter succeed under Jim in Ann Arbor. Herbert's injury just needs to be watched as we get closer to the season because of how long it can linger.

#### **Miami Dolphins**

**Win total: 9.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

The Dolphins made it rain this offseason, paying both Tua Tagovailoa and Tyreek Hill to kick off training camp and Jaylen Waddle earlier in the offseason. They've locked in their core on offense for the next few years and this is absolutely a Super Bowl contender ... if a few things break right. The offensive line needs to come together quickly ahead of Tua, with this run game setting up the lethal pass game. The perpetually underrated Raheem Mostert, second-year explosive back De'Von Achane and rookie Jaylen Wright have them primed for big things if the line is cooking. Jonnu Smith was a sneaky YAC addition. The defense has big problems because of injury: Bradley Chubb and Jaelan Phillips are both going to be late coming back most likely and Christian Wilkins walked in free agency. The offense will need to carry things early in the season (as it did last year, not unfeasible!), but the Dolphins also need to figure out how to beat good teams and win when it is cold.

#### **Minnesota Vikings**

**Win total: 6.5 (over -160)**

**Projected record: 7-10**

Vegas is not bullish on the Vikings this year. It's understandable given the change at quarterback and even more understandable when the news broke this week that J.J. McCarthy suffered a season-ending torn meniscus during the preseason. That

means Sam Darnold is starting Week 1 and likely playing the entire season. Going from Kirk Cousins to Darnold is a pretty massive dropoff, especially when you consider how sharp McCarthy looked in his first preseason action, especially when he didn't even have Justin Jefferson out there. There's still a lot on offense with JJ, Jordan Addison (suspension still lurking?) and some lower-tier wideouts plus T.J. Hockenson whenever he returns from injury, but it looks like they're gonna have to run the heck out of the ball with Aaron Jones and Ty Chandler to win. Minny almost seems a little snakebit right now on offense. Another year of Brian Flores defense could be beneficial, although I've got concerns about some of the swaps they made on that side of the ball. The bigger concern is the division -- if the Packers and Bears take the expected steps forward, it's going to be really tough for the Vikings.

#### **New England Patriots**

**Win total: 4.5 (over -150)**

**Projected record: 5-12**

For the first time in more than two decades, there's no Bill Belichick in New England. And while change might have been necessary for the Pats, it sure does throw this season into complete question. Drake Maye is a uber-talented but streaky rookie behind a questionable offensive line with nominal weapons ... and he might not even start to begin the season. Former NC State legend Jacoby Brissett is set to beat out another yet another UNC quarterback for a starting job, and his floor is better than that of Maye to start the season, but he's still dealing with the same issues. DeMario Douglas and Kendrick Bourne (who's on PUP) were joined by Ja'Lynn Polk and Javon Baker in the draft, but the wideout group is still lacking. If Rhamondre Stevenson and Antonio Gibson can actually spark the run game, there's maybe a little more upside here offensively, but it's hard to see the Pats being a top-half-of-the-league unit. Defensively there's a much better chance of success, but even with Jerod Mayo capably running things, we're still talking about a team that lost the best defensive coach in NFL history.

#### **New Orleans Saints**

**Win total: 7.5 (over -120)**

**Projected record: 6-11**

You can tell the pressure is turned up on Dennis Allen simply by listening to some of his harsh quotes on various players leading up to the season. Things will be amplified with offensive line concerns -- the unit that dominated in front of Drew Brees for the last few years has really fallen off, exacerbated by the preseason departure of Ryan Ramczyk. Taliese Fuaga needs to be a borderline star out of the gate at left tackle. And Klint Kubiak, replacing longtime OC Pete Carmichael, needs his offense to function well and quickly. There's enough there for it to happen: Derek Carr, Chris Olave and Rashid Shaheed are a nice trio, and if Alvin Kamara can rebound to his previous form, this offense could be fun to

watch. The defense should maintain a high level and could even take a step forward if Chase Young can live up to expectations. The Saints underperformed their expected win total last year and went 3-6 in one-score games, so I'm potentially too low on if the offense can become more dynamic.

#### **New York Giants**

**Win total: 6.5 (under -135)**

**Projected record: 6-11**

Man it is hard to be bearish on this team when you watch Malik Nabers training camp highlights. The first-round pick has been a non-stop highlight reel right up until he suffered a mild ankle sprain recently. Everything really comes down to Daniel Jones and the offensive line. If the protection holds up, maybe we get a healthy 2022 version of Danny Dimes and this team looks much better on offense. The departure of Saquon Barkley might be a good thing, because it should allow the offense to run a little more fluidly without trying to focus on one person. The addition of Brian Burns alongside Dexter Lawrence and Kayvon Thibodeaux could make for a really nasty pass rush, one that could even make up for any shortcomings in the secondary.

#### **New York Jets**

**Win total: 9.5 (over -150)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

I included the Jets as a team that could possibly make the leap into the playoffs after missing last year, and the entire logic behind this can be summed up in two words: Aaron Rodgers. Unfortunately, the four-time MVP and future Hall of Famer isn't just a potentially great quarterback in 2024, but also a 40-year-old coming off an Achilles injury that cost him the entire 2023 season. Tyrod Taylor should keep the floor raised if Rodgers misses any time, because otherwise this is a pretty darn solid roster. The front office attacked the offensive line problem this offseason, adding Tyron Smith and Morgan Moses in free agency and Olu Fashanu in the draft. Breece Hall and Garrett Wilson are both viable OPOY candidates. The defense should be really good yet again, but it's worth noting the Jets finished just 12th in points allowed last year and really only have a single season of great defensive play. There's just a lot of variance here with Rodgers' health.

#### **Philadelphia Eagles**

**Win total: 10.5 (over -130)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

My projection is going against the Vegas implied success of the Eagles, and it's in large part because of what I expect to be a slow-ish start for Philly. I still see it as a likely playoff team, but it draws the Packers and three quarters of the NFC South to start before a Week 5 bye. They have a new offensive coordinator in Kellen Moore, and even if he's an upgrade, there's some concerns after seeing the Chargers last year, plus the natural acclimation time. The loss of Jason Kelce and Fletcher Cox - the literal backbone of both the offense



and defense, respectively -- is kind of being glossed over this offseason. Howie Roseman did an outstanding job replacing the two ahead of time by drafting Cam Jurgens and Jordan Davis, but there's a chance this team starts a little slow as they adjust to all the changes.

#### **Pittsburgh Steelers**

**Win total: 8.5 (under -160)**

**Projected record: 6-11**

The quarterback concerns are pretty big in Pittsburgh. The Steelers upgraded to Russell Wilson/Justin Fields, but Wilson hasn't even been on the field during much of training camp. That throws things into severe flux at the position. Fields could be a fantasy darling, but I don't know if his athletic style of quarterbacking will necessarily translate to a bunch of wins. The departure of Diontae Johnson means the Steelers are lacking on the wide receiver depth chart. George Pickens has unlimited upside with his skillset. After him, there was buzz about Van Jefferson as their WR2, although Calvin Austin III and Roman Wilson have made some interesting noise in training camp. Najee Harris and Jaylen Warren are physical runners, and I tend to think an Arthur Smith offense is going to feature them heavily. I don't expect this to be an explosive unit. Defensively, if the Steelers are the top-five unit they can be, this might end up looking like a foolish projection. Fifteen-plus games of T.J. Watt is an absolute must because of how this defense drops off when he's out of the lineup.

#### **San Francisco 49ers**

**Win total: 11.5 (under -125)**

**Projected record: 11-6**

The Niners have one of the most complete rosters in all of football. They're coming off three straight years advancing to the NFC title game including a brutal overtime Super Bowl loss to the Chiefs last year. They are rightfully one of the top Super Bowl favorites. But there's some cause for concern with the recent offseason developments. Christian McCaffrey suffered a calf injury that shouldn't be a big deal but definitely has my antenna up. Brandon Aiyuk still might get traded or he might not! Trent Williams remains unhappy with his contract. There's just a lot swirling around the Niners, and this is a massive number for any team. Note the Vegas juice here, with the expectation the 49ers end up coming in under 12 wins. The schedule isn't particularly brutal, but there are enough pitfalls where I think 11-6 is firmly on the table, especially if the NFC West ends up being as good as we think it could be.

#### **Seattle Seahawks**

**Win total: 7.5 (over -135)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

The Seahawks are a tough projection because of the wholesale changes occurring across the organization. The personnel is largely unchanged, but Mike MacDonald represents the Seahawks' first new coach in a long time and should bring with him an interesting new approach. Pete Carroll is a

Hall of Famer, but MacDonald bringing in offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb could result in some splashy offensive production. Geno Smith (or even Sam Howell) have three exciting receivers in DK Metcalf, Tyler Lockett and Jaxon Smith-Njigba to utilize in the same way the three Washington rookies were used last year at the college level. Kenneth Walker and Zach Charbonnet provide big-play potential in the backfield and we might finally get a Noah Fant breakout.

MacDonald's killed it on defense for years with the Ravens, so the expectations are high for that side of the ball as well. I'm a little higher on Seattle than Vegas and certainly see the Seahawks as a playoff sleeper this year.

#### **Tampa Bay Buccaneers**

**Win total: 7.5 (over -150)**

**Projected record: 9-8**

Everyone counted out the Bucs in a BAD way last year and Baker Mayfield and Co. jammed it in everyone's face. I'm extremely terrified of it happening again with this projection, and I wouldn't be shocked at all if Tampa won the division again. It could even win it at 9-8, so maybe I'm not that far off. Regardless, no one will run away with the NFC South. The bull

case for the Bucs is pretty easy: adding Jalen McMillan will help the passing game, even more so if new OC Liam Coen moves Chris Godwin to the slot. Early returns for Graham Barton paint the picture of another first-round OL hit by GM Jason Licht. The defense has several studs on it already (Vita Vea, Antoine Winfield Jr., etc) and some other high-caliber players who could emerge this year and make Tampa a contender again. Vegas obviously agrees with a heavily juiced over here.

#### **Tennessee Titans**

**Win total: 6.5 (under -135)**

**Projected record: 6-11**

Yet another total wild card with the full-blown changeover from a previous regime. For me, it was always going to be a hard sell on whoever replaced Mike Vrabel, but I'm high on Brian Callahan and what this team has in place for 2024. DeAndre Hopkins' injury is concerning but he should be back early in the regular season, plus the addition of Calvin Ridley gives them a little wiggle room. Callahan bringing his dad, Bill Callahan, is massive for the offensive line, not to mention the addition of JC Latham in the first round. Defensively this team is a total wild card, and if the defense isn't good we could see the offense throw-

ing the ball a TON. I don't think the Titans will necessarily be "good" this year, but I think we'll see enough from Will Levis and the new coaching staff to the point everyone sort of thinks that even a six-win season could be considered a positive step forward.

#### **Washington Commanders**

**Win total: 6.5 (over -130)**

**Projected record: 7-10**

Another wholesale change when it comes to the regime in charge -- Dan Quinn is in and he brought Kliff Kingsbury with him as well as a new quarterback in Jayden Daniels, whom the Commanders drafted second overall following his Heisman season. The offensive line is a major concern, but maybe Daniels' mobility can make up for it? There are enough weapons here to maaaaaybe make a bull case for competing in the NFC East, but Terry McLaurin needs to be his usual consistent self, Jahan Dotson needs to live up to his draft billing and Austin Ekeler needs to find the fountain of youth. This team will play fast on offense and needs Quinn to figure out how to elevate a middle-tier defense if it wants to complete. Things should be on the upswing in Washington, though.

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# College Football News and Notes



BO CARTER

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The 2024 college football season, the 156th in history, has arrived. There were eight NCAA FBS, FCS and Division II contests on the slate Saturday (see notes below). Of interest, the usually early-starting NAIA gridiron slate does not begin its full slate until Thursday with 12 clashes. The NAIA began its 85th official football campaign since its founding in 1940 with a single tussle last Saturday pitting Lincoln (Calif.) at College of Idaho. There are 774 colleges and universities competing in '24 intercollegiate football on all levels with newcomers Anderson (S.C.), Calvin U. (Mich., and a longtime college baseball power as well), Centenary (La.), New England College (N.H.), Simpson U. (Calif.), and William Woods U. (Mo.) entering the fray as newcomers and renewing programs.

The 2024 season NCAA FCS Championship contest will be played on Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, in a primetime spot with airtime to be determined on the ESPN family of networks. Site will be Toyota Stadium in Frisco, Texas, for the 15th consecutive year.

Alabama high school football launched its 133rd season last Thursday with dozens of contests involving state-to-ranked squads. The state has kept its football

going through two world wars, COVID-19 (with limited seating), hurricanes, tornadoes, and even a large sinkhole at Gordo (Ala.) HS Stadium one year. The first game played with high school participants was in 1892 when the University of Alabama hosted Birmingham Central (now Phillips) HS and won 56-0. Mississippi celebrated its historic, 120th season of high school gridiron activity last weekend as well after the first contest in the Magnolia State was a 5-0 defensive triumph by Yazoo City over Winona. Of note, Sheffield (Ala.) HS former three-sport standout and All-Southeastern Conference baseball star at Alabama Johnny Wright came out of retirement to guide his hometown school where he also was head coach from 1987-99. Wright racked up 191 wins over 26 seasons with five different high schools before returning to his alma mater.

Last week's edition of the NFF Good in the Game segment featured Joe Moglia who went from Wall Street chair and CEO at TD Ameritrade (now owned by Charles Schwab) to the head coach at Coastal Carolina and his amazing success stories. He remains as special consultant for athletics to the CCU president's office. The NFF also posted all the major college football rules' changes for 2024 through NCAA football officiating coordinator Steve Shaw and NCAA Football Rules Committee chair and Mid-American Conference commissioner Dr. Jon Steinbrecher.

On Aug. 14 the NFF initiated the I Played the Game campaign to foster camaraderie among former players by encouraging them to share their personal stories and experiences on NFF platforms. As part of this initiative, the NFF has developed an online form to gather information and build a comprehensive database of former players willing to serve as

ambassadors for the game. This platform welcomes anyone who has ever played football, regardless of gender or level of play.

To access the website and contribute stories, please go to the link [footballfoundation.com/played](http://footballfoundation.com/played).

The FWAA-NFF Grantland Rice Top 16 FBS will continue throughout the season and end with the final survey after the College Football Playoff championship encounter on Jan. 20, 2025.

The 66th NFF Awards Dinner is set for Tuesday, Dec. 10, in Las Vegas with sponsorship by the Las Vegas please access [FootballFoundation.org](http://FootballFoundation.org).

#### Also on the NFF calendar:

Sept. 25 - Announcement of the 2024 Campbell Trophy® semifinalists; Oct. 23 - Announcement of the 2024 Campbell Trophy® Finalists and the 2024 NFF National Scholar-Athlete Class, presented by Fidelity Investments. On-campus salutes to 2024 NFF College Hall of Fame inductees presented by Fidelity Investments are being scheduled and will be revealed in coming days.

The current longest NCAA FBS member streaks without a shutout through Aug. 24 are Florida with a NCAA-record 449 since 1988, TCU with 394 since 1991, Georgia with 372 since 1995, Virginia Tech with 370 since 1995, Nebraska with 351 since 1996 (the only Big Ten Conference team that has scored in every game in the 21st Century), Boise State with 339 since 1997, Iowa with 297, Alabama with 289 since 2001, and Clemson with 280 since 2003.

#### NFF College Hall of Fame Facts:

**Some notable birthdates** in NFF College Hall of Fame annals in the Aug. 26-Sept. 1 time period are Aug. 26 (1876) Gary Cochran, Driftwood, Pa.; (1912) Aaron Rosenberg, Brooklyn, N.Y.; (1918) Harry Smith, Russellville, Mo.; (1928) Jerry Claiborne, Hopkinsville, Ky.; (1933) George Welsh, Coaldale, Pa.; (1952) Donnie Shell, Whitmire, S.C.; Aug. 27 (1908) Frank Leahy, O'Neill, Neb.; (1951) Mack Brown, Cookeville, Tenn.; (1987) Darren McFadden, Little Rock, Ark.; Aug. 28 (1945) Jim Lynch, Lima, Ohio; Aug. 29 (1896) George McLaren, Pittsburgh, Pa.; (1924) Clyde Scott, Dixie, La.; (1939) Bob Ferguson, Columbus, Ohio; (1950) Tommy Casanova, New Orleans, La.; Aug. 30 (1915) George Cafego, Whipple, W.Va.; (1940) Lance Alworth, Houston, Texas; (1955) Marvin Powell, Ft. Bragg, N.C.; Aug. 31 (1906) Bill Spears, Jasper, Tenn.; (1918) Kenny Washington, Los Angeles, Calif.; (1952) Gary Johnson, Shreveport, La.; (1983) Larry Fitzgerald, Minneapolis, Minn.; Sept. 1 (1904) Johnny Mack

Brown, Dothan, Ala.; (1916) Ed Bock, Ft. Dodge, Iowa; (1950) Phillip Fulmer, Winchester, Tenn.; (1973) Zach Thomas, Pampa, Texas.

**Notable anniversaries** of passings of NFF College Hall of Fame members are Aug. 27 (1958) Bobby Marshall, Minneapolis, Minn.; Aug. 29 (1933) Frank Cavanaugh, Marshfield, Mass.; Aug. 30 (2013) Leo Lewis, Columbia, Mo. Happy birthdays to NFF Hall of Fame members born Aug. 26 Donnie Shell, Aug. 27 Mack Brown (in his 52nd season as a college coach or college football broadcaster), Darren McFadden, Aug. 28 Jim Lynch, Aug. 29 Dr. Tommy Casanova, Aug. 30 Lance Alworth (a spry 84), Marvin Powell, Aug. 31 Gary Johnson, Larry Fitzgerald, Sept. 1 (1904) Phillip Fulmer, Zach Thomas

#### Schedules:

Texas Tech has added Kent State in 2025, Sam Houston in '26 and Incarnate Word in 2029 as home encounters ...Morgan State has slated five additional future non-conference contests against Hampton, Saint Francis (Pa.) and Virginia-Lynchburg over the next six seasons.... Arkansas will host Alabama A&M in 2025...Virginia will renew its series with Richmond in 2031...Jacksonville will complete a two-game contracted series with Southern Miss in 2025 at Hattiesburg, Miss ...The NCAA has continued the Hawai'i Exemption to allow FBS teams traveling to the Island State to play a 13th regular-season contest to help offset travel costs to Honolulu. The Hawai'i-Delaware State contest was the first meeting of the Rainbow Warriors with a NCAA FCS opponent since UG hosted UAlbany on sept. 9, 2023...Yet another scheduling anomaly is that current Big Ten Conference members Indiana and UCLA never have faced off in football over a combined 244 seasons. The 2025 Big Ten slate has these two traditional basketball powerhouse universities meeting in Bloomington, Ind., on a date to be determined.

#### Good Works:

Firefighter Mike Rockne, the great grandson of NFF College Hall of Fame coach Knute Rockne of Notre Dame, was recognized again for performing lifesaving measures for a four-year-old youngster in the Celina, Texas, area outside Dallas. Rockne was an intern for the College Baseball Foundation in Lubbock, Texas, as an undergraduate at Texas Tech and later attained a Master's degree from SMU in management training. He is a trainer and officer for the Celina Fire Department...On Monday-Tuesday, Oct. 28-29, the Texas Gideons will be hosting a large scripture distribution in both English and Spanish translations on the UTEP campus in El



Paso. Volunteers are welcomed...The Air Force Thunderbirds Squadron entertained thousands last week at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, Neb., last weekend with Amazing stunts and close-order formations...Some 60 miles to the west in Lincoln, Neb., Nebraska Huskers fans came out in full force for Meet the Players Huskers Fan Day at the NU practice center...The opening edition of The first edition of Louisiana Athletics Live with head coach Michael Desormeaux is Monday night at Walk-On's Sports Bistreaux in Lafayette, La.

#### **Football Coaches:**

Lou Conte Jr. has taken over as head coach at Westfield State...Oklahoma State head coach Mike Gundy issued the edict that there is no more negotiation for NIL compensation and that it is time for the Cowboys to concentrate on football. Gundy's reaction to Baylor shirts reflecting NIL compensation: "We pay our players very well here (at OSU)"...Arkansas head coach Sam Pittman promises new talent and student-athletes rising to challenges will bring improvement in the Razorbacks '24 crew. UA offensive coordinator and former Razorbacks head coach has been pleased with the squad adapting to a more comprehensive playbook on offense....Mississippi State head coach Jeff Leiby is approaching the '24 campaign as a chance to get the Bulldogs back into bowl contention after a school-record 13 consecutive postseason treks from 2010-22...Former Colorado football staff member Travon Reilly left the program over the summer to seek additional NIL agreements for student-athletes nationally.

**Hometowns** of more 2024 college head coaches – Michigan State: Jonathan Smith, Pasadena, Calif.; Michigan Tech : Dan Mettlich. Gwinn, Mich.; Middlebury: Doug Mandigo, Middlebury, Vt.; Middle Georgia State: Victor Hall, Auburn, Ala.; Middle Tennessee: Derek Mason, Phoenix, Arizona.

#### **Directors of Athletics:**

Lehigh director of athletics Joe Sterrett is retiring after 35 years as AD and after 50-plus years in the Lehigh department of athletics...Valparaiso has elevated Laurel Hosmer to permanent director of athletics after the six-month tenure as interim AD...U. of New Orleans AD Tim Duncan is leaving to become Memphis' senior deputy AD after five years at UNO....Princeton director of athletics John Mack is hoping that the Ivy League will continue to be active in recruitment both on the academic and competitive sides and can upgrade its NIL programs...Denver administrators approved a contract extension for AD Josh Berlo through the 2028-29 competitive year...North Carolina AD Bubba Cunningham connoted that some private equity entities have spoken with him about possible investment in Tar Heels athletics but that no finite decisions have been made...Baylor AD Mack Rhodes commented on the innovative assistant coaches' polo shorts worn by BU coaches in pre-fall

workouts adorned with We Pay Players shirts to emphasize the Bears commitment to NIL agreements...Minnesota AD Mark Coyle cautions that some of the estimates for future Big Ten Conference revenue distributions may be overstated and members are watching their annual budgets closely without these larger financial projections...Alabama AD Greg Byrne expressed his concerns and positive outlook on norms such as NCAA roster limits, naming rights and on-field stadium signage, the NCAA House settlement, compensation for student-athletes as university employees, and NIL directives in recent interviews....William & Mary AD Brian Mann praised recent search firm assistance and noted how it helped assemble qualifications and choose solid candidates for new positions...Houston AD Eddie Nuñez recalled how disasters such as hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic have affected programs in college athletics differently and how administrators have found imaginative solutions to these challenges. He also had his five-year contract certified with compensation and bonus provisions...SIU Edwardsville AD Andrew Gavin spoke of moving from NCAA Division II Wisconsin-Parkside to the suburban St. Louis university and some challenging schedules...Alabama AD Greg Byrne relates that the new basketball arena in Tuscaloosa will be a basketball-only arena instead of a multi-purpose building....Florida chose Amy Hass as deputy AD and senior women administrator...Campbell selected Emily Carosone as softball head coach...Dartmouth added Mike Nelson as director of track and field and cross country...Holy Cross women's basketball head coach Maureen Magarity has been replaced by interim head coach Candice Green...St. John's (N.Y.) men's basketball head coach Rick Pitino has recommended former Louisville AD and NCAA Division Baseball Committee chair Tom Jurich for national openings such as the New Mexico AD's vacant position...Jacksonville State named Robbie Fields director of golf and Syllas Elliott men's golf head coach....William & Mary extended women's basketball head coach Erin Dickerson's contract through April 2029...Arizona State associate AD Vince Volpe called Missouri State athletics a department in need of modernization during a public forum for MSU AD finalists...Nebraska Deputy AD Haven Fields told the Career Hustle podcast that his experience as a student-athlete at Auburn and time served in Washington athletics prepared him for the heady challenges of being a NU administrator...UNI chose Jerry Wollmering as senior associate AD and chief financial officer...Seattle U. selected Jordana LeSavage as cross country and track and field head coach...Charleston Southern added Chan Metts as women's golf head coach...Jamie Vaughn was named Texas A&M's executive associate AD for internal operations...Minnesota chose Jamar Thompson as senior associate AD

for development...Forner Tennessee senior associate AD Bill Houston has moved to an executive position with the Legends Group at Florida State athletics...Sydney Griffin is the new Georgia Tech associate AD for development operations...Cal State Fullerton named Gina Oaks Garcia softball head coach...Georgia Tech swimming and diving head coach Courtney Shealy Hart is moving into another profession after coaching the Yellow Jackets for 15 years...Eastern Kentucky tabbed Terry Johnson as senior associate AD for sport sponsorship...Butler selected Cassie Shultz as women's tennis head coach...Esteemed president Dr. R. Gerald Turner of SMU will retire in June 2025 after a record, 30-year tenure in the post. He has helped guide SMU athletics through five Division I conference changes since he began his tenure in 1995...Houston president Dr. Renu Khator related that he does not want to increase student fees to support athletics and sees solid potential for fundraising from the Greater Houston community (six million-plus population) and businesses. With these efforts he believes UH can double its budget for athletics, and he also has okayed a \$10 million university loan to cover a 2023-24 deficit in the department...Vanderbilt chancellor Dr. Daniel Diermeyer has placed special emphasis on the Nashville-Vanderbilt One Community Project for the 2024-25 academic year...Columbia tabbed Dr. Katrina Armstrong as interim president...UC Santa Barbara chancellor Henry Yang will reboot to a faculty position in June 2025...Illinois added Patrick Sojka as senior associate AD for commercial operations...The latest position openings in athletics on DITicker.com are at Arizona, the Big South Conference, Boise State, Brown, Central Michigan, Cincinnati, Evansville, Furman, Georgia Tech, Houston, Indiana State, Jacksonville State, James Madison, Louisiana Monroe, Missouri, NC State, Nebraska, New Mexico, Northern Colorado, Pittsburgh, Providence, Purdue, Rhode Island, Rice, Saint Francis (Pa.), Saint Louis, San Francisco, SMU, South Dakota State, Stanford, Tennessee Tech, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Texas State, Texas Tech, Tulsa, UIC, UMass Lowell, UNLV, UTEP, UTRGV, Virginia, and Washington.

#### **The Conferences:**

The Southeastern Conference has determined tiebreaker procedures for first- and second-place entrants its 33rd annual championship clash on Dec. 7 in Atlanta. The circuit had divisional champs facing off from 1992-2023 before expanding to 16 members without East and West Divisions in '24...The Big 12 Conference will continue its special, three-day Big 12 Homecoming celebrations at all 16 members' campus sites this year with support from Allstate, the College Football Playoff Foundation, Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue, and WWE...The Big 12 lost its four affiliate members for women's rowing last week as the SEC has adopted that sport as

its 22nd championship sport. The SEC also sponsored wrestling competition from 1970-82 before that was dropped. Interesting, Missouri and Oklahoma remain as affiliate members of the Big 12 Conference in wrestling, and the Tigers captured the 2022 Big 12 mat team crown...The Big 12 also has awarded 28 post-graduate Dr. Prentice Gautt Memorial Scholarships to 2023-24 seniors in multiple sports to honor the legacy of the first Black football student-athlete at Oklahoma, the longtime assistant commissioner of the Big 12 and Big Eight Conferences and former treasurer of the NCAA...Big Ten Conference and the MLB Chicago Cubs will host three men's hockey matches at Wrigley Field in Chicago on Friday, Jan. 3, 2025 with Penn State vs. Notre Dame and Ohio State vs. Michigan and on Jan. 4 with Michigan State and Wisconsin.

#### **The Bowls:**

The new Extra Points Bowl is set for Nov. 23 at the Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton, Ohio, with opponents being the top-ranked NCAA Playoff participants in the Division III Ohio Athletic Conference and the D-III Presidents' Athletic Conference. In addition, the highest ranked non-NCAA playoff teams from the North Coast Athletic Conference and the Heartland Athletic Conference will meet that same day at a site and time to be determined as part of the new Opendorse Bowl Series. Both bowls will be streamed live on the FloSports Network...Texas State joined the FBS bowl-attending ranks in post-2023 and won its initial outing in the 2023 SERVPRO First Responder Bowl 45-21 over Rice...Duquesne played in and won the 1937 Orange Bowl contest 13-12 over Mississippi State and later has competed in NCAA FCS to hold a perfect, 1-0 bowl mark...UMass is hoping to make its first FBS bowl trek in post-2024 after reclassifying to NCAA FBS in 2012. The Minutemen previously competed in NCAA College Division bowls – the 1964 Tangerine, 1972 Boardwalk, and 1978 Pioneer...The Goodyear Cotton Bowl Foundation was featured on North Texas Giving Day and the WFAA-TV Good Morning Texas program with a \$10,000 contribution to the At Last! Charitable Foundation and ALF chair Kevin Walker.

#### **The Players:**

Georgia Tech kicker Gavin Stewart connected on a 44-yard field goal at the gun to upend No. 10 nationally Florida State 24-21 in the Aer Lingus Football Classic before 51,711 attendees in American football-anxious Dublin, Ireland. Incidentally Tech punter David Shanahan was celebrated on his return to his hometown of Castleton, County Kerry, Ireland, where he practiced kicking as a youngster by punting to cows in a neighboring barnyard..Tarleton State celebrated its official first game as a member of NCAA FCS with a 26-23 victory over McNeese State. The Texans will be eligible for postseason activity again in November. RB Kayvon Britten rushed for



164 yards on 25 attempts to help the United Athletic Conference squad gain an intersectional win over its Southland Conference foe...Chalk up another big road upset for NCAA FCS member Montana State over Mountain West Conference contender and FBS affiliate New Mexico by a 35-31 margin. MSU quarterback passed for 309 yards on 21-of-32 aerial work and two TDs and rushed for another as the Bobcats overcame a 31-21 Lobos advantage in the fourth period....

...Southeast Missouri of the OVC-Southland Alliance topped North Alabama 37-15 in the FCS Kickoff Classic at Montgomery, Ala., behind 97 rushing yards and three TDs by RB Payton Brown...SMU made its debut as an Atlantic Coast Conference member with a 29-24 road win over stubborn Nevada after falling behind 24-13. Tight end R.J. Maryland (son of NFF College Hall of Fame member Russell Maryland of Miami, Fla.) led the comeback with eight catches for 162 yards and the winning TD...Hawai'i captured its season opener for the first since 2020 over Fresno State with a 35-14 triumph over Delaware State of the MEAC. The Rainbow Warriors received a 17-of-34 passing night for 203 yards and three TDs by senior QB Brayden Schager who raised his career totals to 635-of-1,066 aurally for 59.6 percent, 6,708 yards, and 43 TD passes

...For the first time in U. of Calgary (Canada) Dinos history (and possibly in the annals of college football) there are three brothers playing wide receiver during the '24 outing – Noah Gutek, Luke Gutek and Jack Gutek. UC coaches have hinted that all three may be in the lineup on the same plays this fall...Last week's MEAC/SWAC Challenge contest at Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Ga., found SWAC power Florida A&M edging former MEAC opponent Norfolk State 24-23 behind QB Daniel Richardson with 22-of-30 passing for 286 yards and three scores...Freshman QB Dylan Raiola, son of Nebraska lineman great Dominic Raiola, is scheduled to become the fourth freshman QB to start in Huskers annals after NFF College Hall of Fame member Tommie Frazier broke that ice in 1992. Later research found that 17-year-old freshman QB Ted Kenfield drew starts in the World War II-abbreviated season of 1943 for the Huskers...Some notable names on the Earl Campbell Tyler Rose Award 2024 watch list are Taylen Green of Arkansas, returning Tyler Rose recipient Ollie Gordon III of Oklahoma State, Jaden Greathouse of Notre Dame, Bryson Green of Wisconsin, Quinton Joyner of USC, and Dequan Finn of Baylor. There are 97 players on the early listing from 31 different states...

Jacksonville State's Clay Webb, Liberty's Jay Hardy, New Mexico State's Shiyazh Pete, UTEP's Maurice Westmoreland, and WKU's Hosea Wheeler are among 90 stalwarts selected for the 2024 Vince Lombardi Award (top defensive line players and linebackers) watch list...Boise

State football standouts Kage Casey, Jonah Dalmas and Braxton Fely and volleyball student-athlete Kiersten Van Kirk were highlighted as four married student-athletes having to find a tight time balance between competition and families...Louisiana RB Dre'lyn Washington has been a consensus All-Sun Belt Conference preseason performer as well as a member of the Doak Walker Award watch list...Boise State punter James Ferguson-Reynolds has racked up virtually consensus All-America honors with six agencies selecting him as a first-teamer as well as Ray Guy Award watch list recognition...Arkansas coaches feel that San Jose State transfer OT Fernando Carmona will be guiding force along the front wall...Mississippi State added Wes Pritchard as a late grant-in-aid recipient in mid-August...North Alabama continues to recruit well nationally with quarterbacks who starred many miles from the Florence, Ala., campus. Noah Walters of Lincoln (Neb.) East HS tossed 40 TD passes over two years as the Lions starter in 2022 and '23 while new 2024 starter Ari Patu is from Folsom, Calif., via the transfer portal and Stanford...The newly anointed drum major for the 2024 Texas Longhorn Band is Ally Morales of local Austin McCallum HS.

#### **Around the Campus:**

Oklahoma athletics sported a school-high \$110.3 million in gifts for fiscal year 2024 and broke the existing record of \$109 million from fiscal year 2022...Penn State nabbed a \$25 million Beaver Stadium founders gift from the Misitano family and PAM Health for the facility's renovation and netted an additional \$10 million from an anonymous donation for yet another friend of athletics for this project...Texas Tech has gained a \$5 million donation from alumnus Mike Wallace for the South End Zone renovation and Dustin R. Womble Football Center...Chattanooga athletics netted a UTC-high \$4.7 million in gifts during fiscal year 2024 for an increase of 21 percent over the previous annual take...Fairfield athletics attained \$2.5 in donations for fiscal year 2024 and an increase of 21 percent from the previous year...USF is preparing for a campus-wide celebration for the groundbreaking of the university's campus stadium on Oct. 18 as the Bulls host UAB the next day. The facility is set for completion by August 2027...Iowa State may lead NCAA FNS with 10 returning starts apiece on offense and defense this season...Virginia Tech has released a limited number of scattered tickets for the Tech-Boston College national telecast from Blacksburg, Va., on Thursday, Oct. 17....

...The Hokies Maroon and Orange Memories program for September and October include experiences such as visiting with HokieBird at football halftimes and 15-plus total unique opportunities for fans and alumni during '24 skirmishes....

...Stanford athletics has allied with College Sports Jobs, D1 Ticker and Women Leaders in Sports for personnel and relocation serv-

ices and just celebrated Stanford Kids Day with free admission to events last week...LSU has sold out its football season tickets with 71,250 purchased...Allen U. (S.C.) is preparing to build a new, on-campus football stadium in coming months...Delaware State's football squad had to depart New York's JFK Airport a day late for the season opener at Hawai'i due to some bus transportation delays. The Rainbows downed their Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference opponent last Saturday night and Sunday morning U.S. continental time...Clemson athletics will employ the Clemson Ventures Group as a strategic partner with a commercial business structure and extensive marketing agency to assist Tigers annual finances...Baylor's sparkling Fudge Football Development Center has received kudos for its unique weight room, practice fields, meeting rooms, locker rooms, and similar upgrades...North Florida athletics is expanding and upgrading meeting rooms, locker rooms and offices for men's and women's basketball and volleyball...Wichita State athletics and Paciolan are continuing their ticketing and business operations' relationships...Coastal Carolina athletics revamped its official website through SIDEARM Sports...Several updates at Tennessee's Lindsey Nelson Stadium apparently will have to be made during the 2025 season, but they will not interrupt the home schedule. Completion is set for February 2026 or slightly earlier...Nebraska women's volleyball has sold out its 2024 home match schedule and had a packed house for last week's intrasquad clash on campus...Florida athletics is looking for a general manager for revenue sharing with student-athletes in light of the NCAA House settlement agenda...Colorado and prominent sponsor for head coach and NFF College Hall of Fame member Deion Sanders - Aflac – will help develop eight custom sideline and pressbox headsets for the coming campaign....

...Vanderbilt athletics mailed out its annual Donor and Fan Compliance Guide and annual Commodore Club appeal with updates on the FirstBank Stadium/Dudley Field club levels and renovations. VU also continues taking applications for the Mr. C's Kids Club Junior Commodores program this autumn...UIC and the Parker Executive Search Group are cooperating for the location of a new Flames AD...Holistic Athlete Health Solution is adding a sports nutrition regimen with Silver Packages for \$158 annually and Platinum Packages for \$288...The Ole Miss NIL Grove collective has been counting donations for priority points for football seating and the Ole Miss Athletics Foundation...Oregon State has reached a 96 percent renewal rate in football season tickets from 2023...St. Bonaventure has completed detailing the Bob Lanier Court for the 2024-25 season presented by the Shults Auto Group...Oklahoma State student-athletes also will sport QR codes on their football helmets to provide links for

fans wishing to donate to the OSU NIL collective...UCF already has a school standard for men's basketball season ticket sales with the schedule to be determined for 2024-25...Colorado held an open preseason practice at Denver's All-City Stadium at Denver South HS before an enthusiastic turnout...Nebraska (taken inside Memorial Stadium/Dr. Tom Osborne Field confines), Nebraska-Kearney, Rice, and Vanderbilt freshmen classes of 2028 lined up for special introductory group photos on their campus locales...Sports San Diego (Calif.) has determined the matchups and times for the second annual Rady Children's Basketball Charity Invitational on Nov. 28-29 at UC San Diego's LionTree Arena...Western Illinois has denoted university-wide staff cutbacks because of rising operational costs and falling enrollment figures since the 2019-20 academic year. The full financial impact on WIU athletics still is being determined. Other Notables:

NFF College Hall of Fame coach R.C. Slocum of Texas A&M told media that he has been impressed with the preseason work of new Aggies head coach Mike Elko and his staff as the A&M prepares to host Notre Dame Saturday...Chuck Beard, who was a lineman on North Alabama's renewal of football in 1949 and starred for undefeated teams at Sheffield (Ala.) HS, was highlighted on the ESPN telecast of North Alabama-Southeast Missouri in the FCS Classic in Montgomery, Ala. Beard is now 95 years old and was a successful soft drink bottler in the City of Senators for seven decades before retiring...NFF Hall of Fame QB at Florida and multi-team head coach Steve Spurrier delighted Muscle Shoals area fans as the featured speaker at the North Alabama Football Pride and Auction banquet earlier this month in Florence, Ala. Spurrier spent time as a youth in bordering state Tennessee as his father was a Methodist pastor in the Johnson City, Tenn., before the OI' Ball Coach signed with the Gators as an undergrad...Dr Pepper's Fansville series of commercials returns with Texas QB Quinn Ewers playing a deputy to sheriff and NFF College Hall of Fame LB Brian Bosworth in several humorous gigs...Pro Football Hall of Fame LB Ray Lewis of Miami (Fla.) gave a motivational talk at a Colorado Buffaloes preseason workout...Shaq's Big Chicken restaurants are opening in Texas with the first restaurant slated to go into service on Sept. 3 in Fort Worth. Owner and Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame member Shaquille O'Neal has been living in the famed Dallas suburb of Carrollton, Texas, while the Dallas-Fort Worth regional eateries are being constructed.

#### **Media Musings:**

Former Texas and NFL QB Colt McCoy has retired from on-field duties and will work with NBC Sports on Big Ten Conference football telecasts...The Wall Street Journal's Jared Diamond and Robert



O'Connell observed that Ivy League members may have other challenges than just gaining admissions for standout student-athletes and that the "allure" of the Ivy League education may not be as emphatic as the previous 50-60 years because of more diversified majors at many top university programs nationally - plus NIL compensation... Award-winning college football and NBA broadcaster Bill Land is retiring from broadcasting after a four-decade run with Big 12 Conference Showcase and hundreds of additional telecasts... Deadline for media credentials' applications for the Southwest Classic between Arkansas and Texas A&M on Sept. 28 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, is Friday, Sept. 20, at 5 p.m. (CDT)... The heralded Ft. Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram is moving toward a three-days-weekly publishing schedule with postal subscriptions and online editions only. The newspaper first appeared in 1906 .. Puck's John Ourand and Matt Belloni analyzed numerous updates in broadcasting for athletics with special reference to how webstreaming is figuring heavily into new multimedia rights' agreements... ESPN and Genius Sports are collaborating for instant data and statistical analysis for NCAA, NBA and WNBA events with additional augmented "megacasts" of major championship events in these sports... Brandr Group executives gave their thoughts on a national podcast about competition among agencies in NIL activities and volatility in the NIL market over its first three years... ExtraPoints.com saluted Northern Arizona for the alternate nickname Astrojacks and its marketing prospects... CBS Sports reporters Gary Parrish and Matt Norlander polled head and assistant coaches about the largest requests that prospective student-athletes made to them for NIL purposes... Sportico's Michael McCann briefed law professors and gained their opinions about collegiate free labor markets for student-athletes, updated Title IX provisions and revenue sharing possibilities as the NCAA House settlement comes into play... Coya, formerly known as the OWN IT mobile application, has produced new methodology to help performance and longevity of service into a practical measuring stick for numerous sports... Sportico's Jacob Feldman relayed that several colleges have acquired Microsoft Surface devices, Apple iPads and DVSPORT Rewind devices and software for both in-game and postgame updates and reconstruction of plays for analysis and scouting purposes. Some schools also are utilizing DVD and online swaps for game video accounts.... The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch newspaper's David Teel studied the last five years of the ACC Network that recovered from numerous COVID-19 challenges

and has benefitted from the leadership of ESPN senior director for programming and acquisitions Jeramy Michiaels... CBS Sports' Candid Coaches series written by Matt Norlander and Gary Parrish polled 100-plus NCAA FBS and Division I head and assistant coaches with 73.7 percent answering that Arkansas athletics has the optimum program for NIL compensation... Bally and Diamond Sports will not be the television partners for the NBA Dallas Mavericks in 2024-25... The Washington Post newspaper remembered interesting days during Oklahoma's national championship runs during the 1970s and 1980s and the demise and later post-football-career rise of pastor and OU quarterback Charles Thompson as well as late coach Charley Pell at Jacksonville State, Clemson and Florida State and his challenges with NCAA enforcement... On3.com's Pete Nakos interviewed Ingram Smith, president of the Florida State NIL The Battle's End collective, about the group's rapid evolution, retaining top student-athletes with incentives, the NIL's impact on whether underclassmen declare early for the NFL Draft, and how NIL proceeds are divided among transfer portal entries into the program and high school signees... College Football Report projects these top regular-season marks for 2024: Georgia 12-0 and Alabama, Ohio State, Oklahoma State, Oregon, Notre Dame, and Utah each at 11-1. Some of the top 10-2 record projections by CFR are Kansas State, Clemson, Penn State, LSU, and Missouri, among others.

#### FWAA, CSC, NCAA, Etc.:

College Sports Communicators executive director Eric Christianson is leaving the organization to accept an executive position at NACDA/ Veteran publicist Will Roleson has been named interim CSC executive director... The 2024-25 FWAA membership directory is almost off the press, and those wishing to join the association as NCBWA and USBWA writers' organizations may access Collegepress box.com for links and voting instructions for 2024-25 honor teams. In the interim, FWAA members have been emailed a link to the online directory... The USBWA also is accepting entries from current or prospective members for the 2023-24 USBWA Best Writing Contest via the official USBWA.com website... College Sports Communicators featured in major online or social media posts in recent days are Jason Hove of South Dakota State, Tom Weber of Southern Illinois, Scott Holland of Western Illinois, Trevor Parks of Youngstown State, and Sarah Boissonneault of the Northeast Conference... Arizona State, Florida, LSU, Michigan State, Tennessee, UCLA, USC, and Wofford are conferring with NCAA enforcement and compliance offi-

cials concerning possible challenges and probes at their respective schools... Author, lecturer, award-winning journalist, and former assistant football coach at Texas Wesley Marjorie Herrera-Lewis is new commissioner of the Global Flag Football League™... The Hidden Gym and ECHL Allen (Texas) Americans hockey club are collaborating on special discounts for tickets and gym users... The NBA Los Angeles Clippers Dome features a Parallel Reality video board with mega-pixels utilizing a broad scheme of colors in multiple directions... The NCAA has requested that a Louisiana court dismiss a lawsuit seeking reinstatement for the 37 victories vacated under the tenure of former head coach Les Miles... Player agent Drew Rosenhaus opines that allowing student-athletes to be considered paid university employees is a positive move for possibly a more structured solution for the NIL... The Services Employees International Union Local 560 representing the Dartmouth men's basketball players put forth jurisprudence that Dartmouth has not bargained with student-athletes for university compensation and other benefits...

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#### 2024-25 College Football Playoff Bowl Schedule

(All Games Televised by ESPN, ABC or TNT Sports, EST Airtimes, Campus Sites For First Four Games)

Friday-Dec. 20 – First Round (9-12 Seeds in CFP Over Two Days)

Teams, Sites TBD – 8 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 21

Teams, Sites TBD, noon (TNT Sports)

Teams, Sites TBD, 4 p.m. (TNT Sports)

Teams, Sites TBD, 8 p.m.

Tuesday-Wednesday, Dec. 31-Jan. 1, 2025

Dec. 31 – Vrbo Fiesta Bowl, Glendale, Ariz., teams TBD, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 1 – Chick Fil-A Peach, Atlanta, Ga., 1 p.m.; Rose Bowl presented by Prudential, Pasadena, Calif., 5 p.m.; Allstate Sugar, New Orleans, Dec. 20-21 winners vs. Top Four Seeds, 8 p.m.

Thursday-Friday, Jan. 9-10, 2025

Jan. 9 – Capital One Orange Bowl, Miami Lakes, Fla., winners of quarterfinals, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10 – Goodyear Cotton Bowl, Arlington, Texas, winners of quarterfinals, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 20 – College Football Playoff National Championship Game, Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Ga., semifinal winners, 7:30 p.m.

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