

Gridiron Gold Sheet Football Newsletter

Dennis Stagliano's Gridiron Gold Sheet
An Award Winning Football Newsletter Since 1981



For the first time ever a sports service went the entire season without a single losing week. Ron Sataloff, President Sports Features Syndicate

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

BOSTON COLLEGE – 6½ Over Rutgers by 14

The Boston College Eagles are the only team in the ACC returning a quarterback with 3,000 career passing yards (Phil Jurkovec), a running back with 1,000 rushing yards (Pat Garwo) and a receiver with 1,000 receiving yards (Zay Flowers).

Jurkovec missed seven games last season due to a freak hand injury. He ended the year with just 914 passing yards, seven touchdowns and four interceptions but the redshirt senior is still considered to be one of the top signal-callers available in the 2023 NFL Draft.

Third-year head coach Jeff Hafley's club is excited to take on the first challenge. With a Big Ten team and a really hard road game (at Virginia Tech) to start the season, I think we saw a little more sense of urgency from everyone, Hafley said of the later stages of training camp.

Despite its explosive returning players, there is a new look to BC's offense with coordinator John McNulty and offensive line coach Dave DeGuglielmo in their first seasons.

BC was ranked 28th nationally in total defense in 2021 and returns its top four tacklers from last year's 6-6 team.

Meanwhile, Rutgers has not named a starting quarterback. Senior Noah Vedral's 1,823 passing yards last year were the most by a Scarlet Knight since 2015. Rutgers coach Greg Schiano said. "I don't know how many quarterbacks you'll see."

Rutgers started 3-0 before finishing 5-8 last year.

The two sides are well-connected despite being separated as Big East rivals in 2004.

Hafley coached under Schiano at Rutgers in 2011 before the two worked together with the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers for the following two years. Three of Hafley's assistants also spent time at Rutgers.

"There's a lot of good friends on that sideline," Schiano said. "I'm really proud of Jeff. I knew Jeff would be a head coach. ... It will be a little strange because I care about those guys, but when you're playing in a game, you're competing and trying to win."

"I'm sure (seeing Schiano before the game) will be a little emotional for me," Hafley said, "but then we'll put the headsets on, it's time to play. I can't say enough about him."

The Eagles have won 11 straight games in a series that hasn't been contested in Massachusetts since 2004. The Eagles have the better quarterback and that will keep the trend as your friend.

Projected Score: Boston College 31, Rutgers 17

KENTUCKY – 17½ Over Miami Ohio by 10

No. 20 Kentucky will be without All-SEC running back Chris Rodriguez Jr. when it hosts Miami of Ohio on Saturday night in Lexington, Ky., after he was among several players suspended for at least the season opener by coach Mark Stoops. Stoops refused Monday to divulge the length of the suspensions.

Rodriguez was arrested on charges of DUI and careless driving in May and has another unresolved incident that hasn't been public, according to reports.

Rodriguez ran for 1,379 yards and nine touchdowns last season. He is 1,134 rushing yards away from breaking Benny Snell's school record for career rushing yards, but a multi-game suspension could hinder his chances of setting the mark.

Those suspended include senior outside linebacker Jordan Wright. In nine games last season, Wright had 30 tackles, six pass breakups and four tackles for loss.

Senior Kavosiey Smoke, who has rushed for 1,306 yards and 12 touchdowns in his career, likely will replace Rodriguez. Ramon Jefferson, who transferred from Sam Houston after running for 1,155 yards and 13 touchdowns last season, also is an option.

J.J. Weaver, who had 34 tackles, six sacks and two interceptions last year, is listed atop the depth chart at outside linebacker.

With Rodriguez's absence, quarterback Will Levis will be counted on even more heavily to get the Wildcats off to a good start.

Levis completed 66 percent of his passes last season for 2,827 yards and 24 touchdowns, with 13 interceptions. He also ran for 376 yards and nine scores on 107 carries.

Expectations are high for Kentucky, which is ranked in the preseason for just the fifth time in school history and for the first time since starting at No. 15 in 1978. Kentucky finished 10-3 and in second place last season in the SEC East Division, behind national champion Georgia.

"First games are always unique because you have a pretty good idea of what you have but you don't know until you go play a football game," Stoops said. "I have confidence in this team, I have confidence in the leadership, I have confidence in the preparation that we've done to this point. Now it's time to go put it on the field."

Kentucky could be tested by what is expected to be a potent Miami of Ohio offense. The RedHawks were picked to finish second in the MAC's East Division, just behind Kent State.

Quarterback Brett Gabbert completed 59.5 percent of his passes last season for 2,648 yards and 26 touchdowns, with six interceptions.

Miami returns four starters along the offensive line, as well as four running backs — Tyre Shelton, Keyon Mozee, Kevin Davis and Kenny Tracy — who combined to run for 1,448 yards and 12 touchdowns last year.

Miami Ohio is thrilled to play on Saturday night against an SEC team on the road. This is quite an opportunity and is thrilling for everyone involved, RedHawks coach Chuck Martin said. They are a really good team, probably the best Kentucky team ever.

Yes, Kentucky will be formidable this year with tons of talent. Nevertheless, they're starting out their season with multiple players absent and Miami Ohio has a solid offense that should be able to keep this game under the generous pointspread.

Projected Score: Kentucky 31, Miami Ohio 21

B.Y.U. at SOUTH FLORIDA Under 59 by 7

Opening a season on a winning note has become embedded in BYU's DNA. The No. 25 Cougars have plenty of reasons to feel optimistic when they travel to Tampa, Fla., to face South Florida in the season opener for both teams on Saturday.

BYU is 5-1 in season openers under head coach Kalani Sitake, with the loss coming against archrival Utah in 2019. The Cougars have won 13 of their last 15 season openers.

BYU quarterback Jaren Hall attributes a willingness to do homework for the program's win-early tendencies.

"You have more time to study their scheme, plays, and watching film than for a normal game week," Hall said. "The more you can burn all of that into your memory, then when you're in the stadium, you can turn off your brain, stop thinking and go have fun. You can allow all your preparation to come out through your energy."

Hall will be eager to show what he can do against the Bulls. The fifth-year junior was sidelined with a rib injury when the Cougars beat South Florida 35-27 last season to open the schedule with a 4-0 record.

Former BYU quarterback Baylor Romney filled in and threw for 305 yards with three touchdowns. Hall made his first career start when the two teams met at Tampa in 2019 – a 27-23 loss for BYU.

Figuring out how to contain Hall will be a dilemma for the Bulls. Hall had a 156.1 pass efficiency rating last season and posted four 300-yard games in 10 starts. He had 2,583 yards and 20 touchdowns through the air overall.

South Florida has defeated just one FBS opponent over the last two seasons, although the trend could change in a hurry in 2022.

The Bulls are returning 18 starters from last season's 2-10 squad while adding key transfers. Baylor transfer Gerry Bohanon won the starting quarterback job in fall camp. South Florida top rusher Jaren Mangham and top receiver Xavier Weaver are both back to lead the offense. The infusion of transfers with veteran contributors already has had a positive impact on team culture.

"I think my first two years, a lot of guys were trying to find a way off the field," USF coach Jeff Scott said. "They were trying to find ways not to practice, not to take reps, and just wait until game day."

That culture has shifted where guys are now out there pushing themselves and encouraging their teammates.”

BYU was preparing to face hot and humid conditions at Tampa on Saturday. Now there’s a really good chance the Cougars could be dealing with rain instead. The team is fully prepared to handle either scenario.

“We have had some practices already where it has been kinda wet and had a scrimmage that was kind of wet,” Sitake said. “I don’t know if we really need to flood the field or put the ball in a bucket of water. We just show up and play. They have to play in the same weather that we play in, too.”

Nevertheless, the weather may have a profound effect on the game. With possible slippery footballs we’re going to recommend taking the under 59.

Projected Score: BYU 32, South Florida 20

OKLAHOMA - 21½ Over UTEP by 37

Nearly 30 years after his coaching career began, Brent Venables will make his head-coaching debut when No. 9 Oklahoma hosts UTEP in Norman, Okla.

“It’s finally here,” Venables said, referring more to the past nine months since he took over from Lincoln Riley as the Sooners’ head coach. “It’s game week and ... this doesn’t ever get old. The excitement, the anticipation is real. This is what I work for.”

Venables, 51, is plenty familiar with his counterpart, UTEP’s Dana Dimel.

When Venables played at Kansas State in 1991-92, Dimel was the Wildcats’ offensive line coach. “(Former Kansas State coach) Bill Snyder’s one of the best offensive minds in the history of college football, in my opinion, and Dana, that’s his root system,” Venables said. “He’s done a nice job wherever he’s been. He’s got his guys believing.”

The Sooners, finished 11-2 last season under Riley, who now the head coach at Southern California. Now, they will debut new systems on both sides of the ball and will have a fair share of new players as well, led by quarterback Dillon Gabriel, a Central Florida transfer.

At Oklahoma, Gabriel has reunited with offensive coordinator Jeff Lebby, who was UCF’s offensive coordinator in 2019. That was Gabriel’s standout season as a freshman.

“I think what we’re about to do on offense is going to be really exciting and definitely going to be aggressive,” Gabriel said. “We pride ourselves on setting the tempo of the game.”

Though Ted Roof is the Sooners’ defensive coordinator, the defense will take on Venables’ character.

During his long stint as a defensive coordinator with the Sooners, and then a decade in the same role at Clemson, Venables gave his defenses a reputation for their aggressive, varied attack.

“Now it’s just time to go out there and prove it,” Oklahoma defensive end Reggie Grimes said. “Can’t wait to see the fans again, can’t wait to just see all my guys make big plays, and I can’t wait to feel the electricity in Norman, Oklahoma, again.”

All of the change with the Sooners has made preparations a bit more difficult for the Miners.

“Brent will have a lot of influence on the defense (and) what we’re expecting to prepare for is Clemson’s offense,” Dimel said. “Their offensive coordinator was at Ole Miss, so we’re studying Ole Miss’ offense. Their special teams coordinator (Jay Nunez) was at Eastern Michigan, so there’s a lot of film that has to be gathered.

“And we watched a bunch of game tape from Oklahoma last year to evaluate their talent, the skill set of each player coming back. So this is an unusual and difficult preparation for us.”

While the game is the season opener for the Sooners, UTEP already played. The Miners are off a 31-13 loss to North Texas, and are looking for their first win over a ranked opponent since 2009.

Let me be clear, that is not going to happen. Oklahoma has won five consecutive openers and hasn’t lost a home opener since 2005. In addition, if UTEP gave up 31 points to North Texas last week, how many points do you think the Sooners will score. With Gabriel rejoining his old offensive coordinator you’re going to see a lot of strikes downfield and in an aggressive offense. Way too much for UTEP to handle in this matchup, so we’re backing the Sooners in what looks like a blow out win and cover.

Projected Score: Oklahoma 47, UTEP 10

UCLA State – 24½ Over Bowling Green by 14

UCLA softened its nonconference schedule considerably this season, yet the Bruins still will be on guard Saturday afternoon at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., with a visit from Bowling Green in the season opener for both teams.

“He’s obviously the guy we’ve got to focus on and stop,” UCLA coach Chip Kelly said of McDonald, a redshirt senior and native of nearby Newport Beach, who is entering his third season as the starter for the Falcons. “It seems like he’s a sharp, really well-coached kid,” Kelly said of McDonald. “He also makes a lot of plays off-script, so when the rush gets home, he can stay alive.”

The Bruins will send an experienced starting quarterback onto the field on Saturday as well.

Dorian Thompson-Robinson is set to begin his fifth season with the Bruins. He threw 21 touchdown passes last season, the same number he had in 2019, but cut his picks in half to six.

“I haven’t changed anything going from fall camp to now game week cause the habits are gonna stay the same,” Thompson-Robinson said. “That’s the foundation I’ve laid before. And so now, just adding onto that and being able to stay consistent with it, I think it’s been the biggest part of this week so far.”

Thompson-Robinson lost his three top receivers from last season, but has developed a solid working relationship with Jake Bobo, a redshirt-senior receiver who led Duke with 74 catches for 794 yards and a touchdown last season.

Bowling Green will be the first team from the Mid-American Conference to play in the Rose Bowl and it also is the first-ever matchup ever between the schools.

McDonald might feel at home, however. And he no doubt will be motivated. Not only is McDonald a Southern California native, his father, Paul McDonald, was a USC QB in the 1970s. Facing UCLA gives the younger McDonald a chance to take on his father’s rival.

"It's the granddaddy of them all. I'm excited," Matt McDonald said, according to Bowling Green's Sentinel-Tribune, repeating the Rose Bowl Game's tagline. "I've always dreamed of playing in that stadium. I took a little different route to get there, but I'm excited to be playing in that stadium."

UCLA will be trying to replace a number of departed players, many of whom went on to the NFL, while Bowling Green returns nine starters on defense, as well as proven quarterback Matt McDonald. UCLA's passing defense gave up 260.3 passing yards per game last season, last in the Pac-12.

Bowling Green will be fired up playing in the Rose Bowl. McDonald will attack the Bruins suspect secondary and will have enough success to keep this game under the huge pointspread. Grab Bowling Green with the points in this game.

Projected Score: UCLA 37, Bowling Green 23

NO NFL THIS WEEK, SO HERE'S 4 MORE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREFERRED PICKS

Western Michigan at No. 15 Michigan State - 21: The Spartans have a new backfield with Jarek Broussard and Jalen Berger, and veteran quarterback Peyton Thorne returns for Mel Tucker.

La'Darius Jefferson and Sean Tyler are a capable tandem at running back for the Broncos, but new QB Jack Salopek threw just 5 passes last season. **Pick: Michigan St 35-17 so take the points.**

Colorado State at Michigan -27: The Michigan offense should remain dynamic no matter how Cade McNamara and J.J. McCarthy split the first-team reps. The Wolverines were 5-1 ATS when favored by more than 14 points last season. Better days are ahead for the Rams under Jay Norvell, but this is a lot to ask in the opener. **Pick: Michigan wins 48-13, take Big Blue ats.**

Utah State at No. 1 Alabama -38: The Crimson Tide should be able to pick their score in the second half, and Bryce Young has to get comfortable with a new core of receivers. The Aggies will get shut down against a Will Anderson-led defense. The Tide covered both times they were favored by more than 30 points last season. **Pick: Alabama wins 51-10 and covers the spread.**

Rice at No. 14 USC -34: The Trojans should have an explosive offense around Caleb Williams, Travis Dye and Jordan Addison, and Rice is in the way here. Look for the Trojans to make an authoritative opening statement against an overmatched opponent.

Pick: USC wins 52-10 and covers the spread.

THIS WEEKS GRIDIRON GOLD SHEET BEST BETS

	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet	Best Bet
CFB	Boston Coll - 6½	Miami O +17½	BYU Under 59	Oklahoma -21½	Bowling Green + 24½
CFB	W Michigan + 21	Michigan - 27	Alabama - 38	USC - 34	

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THIS WEEKS COLLEGE FOOTBALL LINE SHEET](#)



2022 College Football Earliest Test for Top Championship Contenders

Even though September arrives first, most preseason talk discusses what might happen toward the end of college football's regular season. Who wins each conference? Which programs make the College Football Playoff? Who brings home the national title, and will they be undefeated when it happens?

But that opening month often has a marquee opponent that kickstarts a successful campaign. Knock off that program, and the foundation is officially laid for a championship charge. On the other hand, a loss can substantially complicate that pursuit.

The eight teams highlighted here each hold national title odds of +4000 or shorter on DraftKings. Other upsets can happen, but one matchup stands out as the first seemingly major test for these top contenders.

#8 Michigan Wolverines - Title Odds: +4000

Perhaps the kindest introduction to the 2022 campaign belongs to Michigan. Each of the Wolverines' four September games is at home, and none of Colorado State, Hawaii or UConn figure to truly compete with the Maize and Blue. Maryland could on Sept. 24 if its offense excels immediately, but we'll delay the pick until the ensuing Saturday.

Iowa City, after all, hasn't been kind to U-M. Sure, the sample size extends well beyond the current personnel's time in college. But the Michigan program has dropped four straight games at Kinnick Stadium. The good news is Michigan steamrolled Iowa 42-3 in last season's Big Ten Championship Game. The bad news is the Hawkeyes haven't finished worse than 5-2 at home since 2016—yet they upset Michigan that season anyway—and the 2022 squad projects to have a top-tier defense. This matchup will be much tougher than the lopsided tilt in Indianapolis.

#7 Oklahoma Sooners - Title Odds: +4000

Oklahoma should have a favorable start to Brent Venables' tenure. No reasonable person will argue either UTEP or Kent State is more talented than the Sooners. As always, mark a disclaimer that weird stuff happens; Tulane took OU to the wire in last year's opener.

But the main concern for Oklahoma is a Sept. 17 trip to Nebraska, which fell only 23-16 in Norman last season and also stayed within one score of four ranked Big Ten opponents.

And more importantly, the Huskers have Casey Thompson. The transfer from Texas is expected to start for Nebraska, and he brings some serious experience to Scott Frost's offense. Thompson threw for 388 yards and five touchdowns against the Sooners in 2021.

It's a safe bet OU won't be overlooking the Huskers this season, even as recent nemesis Kansas State awaits the following week.

#6 USC Trojans - Title Odds: +2500

Lincoln Riley has a friendly debut with the Trojans, hosting Rice on the first weekend of September. The pressure ramps up a fair amount the next Saturday, though.

USC heads to Stanford, which has reason for optimism after disappointing full seasons in 2019 (4-8) and 2021 (3-9). Stanford, if you count Big 12-bound BYU, only trails one power-conference team in returning production.

While experience doesn't guarantee progress, it's usually beneficial. Riley used the transfer portal to reshape the USC roster, so a direct comparison is unwise. Still, the Cardinal knocked off the Trojans 42-28 last season. The prime-time kick on Sept. 10 will be a decent measuring stick for the start of Riley's first season.

#5 Texas A&M Aggies - Title Odds: +2500

Sam Houston is a successful FCS team on the brink of joining the FBS. The program is hoping to follow in the footsteps of Appalachian State, which made a successful transition to the highest level in 2014. Texas A&M opens the campaign at home against that duo.

But a hyped A&M defense gets a shot at Miami in Week 3. Led by potential early NFL draft pick Tyler Van Dyke, the 'Canes travel to College Station on Sept. 17. Although the receiving corps is a question mark, Van Dyke merits a ton of respect after throwing for 2,931 yards and 25 touchdowns to six interceptions in just nine starts last season.

Texas A&M has home-field advantage—and the atmosphere should be wild for the 9 p.m. ET kick—but new Miami coach Mario Cristobal should bring a highly competitive team to town.

#4 Clemson Tigers - Title Odds: +1000

Clemson opens the season against Georgia Tech in Atlanta. Don't fly past the Yellow Jackets, considering they only lost 14-8 at Clemson last season.

Next for Clemson will be Furman and Louisiana Tech, two programs that—in theory—won't put together 60-minute battles. After that favorable stretch, Dabo Swinney's side travels to 2021 breakout team Wake Forest for a critical conference game on Sept. 24. But guess what? Wake Forest star quarterback Sam Hartman will miss “an extended period of time” for treatment of what the school described Wednesday as medical condition unrelated to football. If he doesn't play it becomes much easier for the Tigers. Clemson won last season's tilt 48-27. However, the Demon Deacons will be at home and should have a few more answers for Clemson.

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#3 Georgia Bulldogs - Title Odds: +400

Finally, an opener makes the cut. The first stop on Georgia's title defense tour includes a Sept. 3 clash with former defensive coordinator Dan Lanning. This offseason, he left Athens to become the head coach at Oregon.

Lanning navigated the highs and lows of the transfer portal, losing a few notable contributors but adding a handful of impact players—including former Auburn QB Bo Nix. But the Oregon boss also inherited an experienced group on both sides of the trenches that largely remains intact for 2022.

To be clear, Georgia is and will be a heavy favorite for the showdown. Take on any power-conference favorite, though, and it certainly qualifies as a major test.

#2 Ohio State Buckeyes - Title Odds: +300

Ohio State sees Georgia's date with Oregon and raises the reigning champs a showdown with Notre Dame. In the preseason Coaches Poll, the Buckeyes checked in second nationally with the Irish at No. 5. Even if the AP ranking is different, the point is unchanged: **This is the big game in Week 1.**

Offense should not be an issue for Ohio State, which returns Heisman Trophy finalist C.J. Stroud, freshman star Tre'Veyon Henderson and All-American wideout Jaxon Smith-Njigba. Notre Dame, meanwhile, has star edge-rusher Isaiah Foskey and Northwestern transfer Brandon Joseph, an All-American safety two years ago. This is a stellar duel to open the season.

#1 Alabama Crimson Tide - Title Odds: +175

Given that Utah State is the reigning Mountain West champion, it'd be disrespectful to say the Aggies are an easy introduction to the 2022 campaign for Alabama.

This conversation isn't difficult, though. The following weekend, Sept. 10, the Crimson Tide travel to Texas. Without question, it's a larger test for the Longhorns. They're attempting to move past a 5-7 record in Steve Sarkisian's debut season after he arrived from the Alabama staff. Vaunted transfer Quinn Ewers could be making his first career start as a college quarterback, too.

Nevertheless, the preseason favorite is once again Alabama. This journey to Austin will merely be the first time the Crimson Tide need to endure a noisy environment against a talent-filled roster to win that championship.



Offensive Coordinator Changes for 2022

AKRON: Joe Moorhead replaces Tommy Zagorski
APPALACHIAN ST: Kevin Barbay replaces Frank Ponce
ARIZONA ST: Glenn Thomas replaces Zak Hill
AUBURN: Eric Kiesau replaces Mike Bobo
BOSTON COLL: John McNulty replaces Frank Cignetti
C MICHIGAN: Paul Petrino replaces Kevin Barbay
CINCINNATI: Gino Guidugli replaces Mike Denbrock
CLEMSON: Brandon Streeter replaces Tony Elliott
COLORADO: Mike Sanford Jr. replaces Darrin Chiaverini
COLORADO ST: Matt Mumme replaces Jon Budmayr
CONNECTICUT: Nick Charlton replaces Frank Giufre
DUKE: Kevin Johns replaces Re'Quan Boyette / Jeff Faris

Defensive Coordinator Changes for 2022

AIR FORCE: Brian Knorr replaces John Rudzinski
AKRON: Tim Tibesar replaces Matt Feeney
ARIZONA: Johnny Nansen replaces Don Brown
ARIZONA ST: Donnie Henderson replaces Antonio Pierce
AUBURN: Jeff Schmedding replaces Derek Mason
BUFFALO: Brandon Bailey replaces Joe Cauthen
CHARLOTTE: Greg Brown replaces Brandon Cooper / Marcus West
CLEMSON: Mickey Conn / Wes Goodwin replaces Brent Venables
COLORADO ST: Freddie Banks replaces Chuck Heater
DUKE: Robb Smith replaces Ben Albert / Matt Guerrieri FLA

FLA ATLANTIC: Brent Dearmon replaces Mike Johnson
 FIU: David Yost replaces Andrew Breiner
 FLORIDA ST: Alex Atkins replaces Kenny Dillingham
 FRESNO ST: Kirby Moore replaces Ryan Grubb
 GA SOUTHERN: Bryan Ellis replaces Doug Ruse
 GEORGIA ST: Trent McKnight replaces Brad Glenn
 GEORGIA TECH: Chip Long replaces Dave Patenaude
 HAWAII: Ian Shoemaker replaces Bo Graham
 ILLINOIS: Barry Lunney Jr. replaces Tony Petersen
 INDIANA: Adam Henry replaces Grant Heard
 KANSAS ST: Collin Klein replaces Courtney Messingham
 KENTUCKY: Rich Scangarello replaces Liam Coen LA
 MONROE: Matt Kubik replaces Rich Rodriguez
 LA TECH: Jake Brown / Scott Parr replaces Joe Sloan
 LOUISVILLE: Lance Taylor replaces Scott Satterfield
 LSU: Mike Denbrock replaces Jake Peetz
 MARSHALL: Clint Trickett replaces Tim Cramsey
 MASS U: Steve Casula replaces Angelo Miranda
 MEMPHIS: Tim Cramsey replaces Kevin Johns
 MIAMI FL: Josh Gattis replaces Rhett Lashlee
 MICHIGAN: Matt Weiss replaces Josh Gattis
 MTSU: Mitch Stewart replaces Brent Dearmon
 NAVY: Vacant replaces Ivin Jasper
 NEBRASKA: Mark Whipple replaces Matt Lubick
 NEVADA: Derek Sage replaces Matt Mumme
 NEW MEXICO ST: Tim Beck replaces Doug Martin
 OHIO U: Allen Rudolph replaces Tim Albin
 OKLAHOMA: Jeff Lebby replaces Cale Gundy
 ODU: Dave Patenaude replaces Kirk Campbell
 OLE MISS: Charlie Weis Jr. replaces Jeff Lebby
 OREGON: Junior Adams replaces Joe Moorhead
 PITTSBURGH: Frank Cignetti Jr. replaces Mark Whipple
 SMU: Casey Woods replaces Garrett Riley
 SOUTH FLORIDA: Travis Trickett replaces Charlie Weis Jr.
 SOUTHERN MISS: Sam Gregg replaces Cayden Cochran
 SYRACUSE: Robert Anae replaces Sterlin Gilbert
 TCU: A.J. Ricker / Garrett Riley replaces Doug Meacham
 TEMPLE: Danny Langsdorf replaces Mike Uremovich
 TEXAS ST UNIV: Jake Spavital replaces Jacob Peeler
 TEXAS TECH: Zach Kittley replaces Sonny Cumbie
 TROY: Joe Craddock replaces Luke Meadows
 TULANE: Jim Svoboda replaces Chip Long
 TX-SAN ANTONIO: Matt Mattox replaces Barry Lunney
 UCF: Chip Lindsey replaces Tim Harris Jr. / G.J. Kinne
 UCLA: Chip Kelly replaces Justin Frye
 UNLV: Nick Holz replaces Glenn Thomas
 USC: Josh Henson replaces Graham Harrell
 VANDERBILT: Joey Lynch replaces David Raih
 VIRGINIA: Des Kitchings replaces Robert Anae
 VIRGINIA TECH: Tyler Bowen replaces Brad Cornelsen W
 KENTUCKY: Ben Arbuckle replaces Zach Kittley
 WASHINGTON: Ryan Grubb replaces John Donovan
 WASHINGTON ST: Eric Morris replaces Brian Smith
 WEST VIRGINIA: Graham Harrell replaces Gerad Park

ATLANTIC: Todd Orlando replaces Mike Stoops
 FLA INTERNATIONAL: Jovan Dewitt replaces Everett Withers
 FLORIDA: Sean Spencer / Patrick Toney replaces Todd
 Grantham
 FRESNO ST: Kevin Coyle replaces William Inge
 GA SOUTHERN: Will Harris replaces Scot Sloan INDIANA:
 Chad Wilt replaces Charlton Warren
 KENT ST: Jeremiah Johnson replaces Tom Kaufman
 LA LAFAYETTE: LaMar Morgan replaces Patrick Toney
 LA MONROE: Vic Koenning / Todd Stroud replaces Zac Alley
 LIBERTY: Josh Aldridge / Jack Curtis replaces Scott Symons
 LOUISIANA TECH: Scott Power replaces David Blackwell LSU:
 Matt House replaces Daronte Jones
 MASSACHUSETTS: Keith Dudzinski replaces Tommy Restivo
 MEMPHIS: Matt Barnes replaces Mike MacIntyre
 MIAMI FL: Kevin Steele / Charlie Strong replaces Manny Diaz
 MIAMI OHIO: Bill Brechin replaces John Hauser / Spence
 Nowinsky
 MICHIGAN: Jesse Minter replaces Mike Macdonald MISSOURI:
 Blake Baker replaces Steve Wilks
 NEVADA: Kwame Agyeman / Mike Bethea replaces Brian Ward
 NEW MEXICO ST: Nate Dreiling / Melvin Rice replaces Frank
 Spaziani
 NORTH CAROLINA: Gene Chizik / Charlton Warren replaces
 Jay Bateman / Tommy Thigpen
 NOTRE DAME: Al Golden replaces Marcus Freeman
 OHIO ST: Jim Knowles replaces Kerry Coombs
 OHIO U: Spence Nowinsky replaces Ron Collins / Pete
 Germano
 OKLAHOMA: Todd Bates / Ted Roof / Jay Valai replaces Alex
 Grinch
 OKLAHOMA ST: Derek Mason replaces Jim Knowles
 OREGON: Tosh Lupoi / Matt Powledge replaces Tim DeRuyter
 OREGON ST: Trent Bray replaces Tim Tibesar
 PURDUE: Ron English / Mark Hagen replaces Brad Lambert
 RUTGERS: Joe Harasymiak replaces Robb Smith
 SMU: Scott Symons replaces Jim Leavitt
 SOUTH FLORIDA: Bob Shoop replaces Glenn Spencer
 TCU: Joseph Gillespie replaces Chad Glasgow
 TEMPLE: D. J. Eliot replaces Jeff Knowles
 TEXAS A&M: D. J. Durkin / Tyler Santucci replaces Mike Elko
 TEXAS TECH: Tim DeRuyter replaces Keith Patterson
 TROY: Shiel Wood replaces Brandon Hall
 TULSA: Luke Olson replaces Joseph Gillespie
 UCLA: Bill McGovern replaces Jerry Azzinaro
 UNLV: Keith Heyward replaces Peter Hansen
 USC: Alex Grinch replaces Todd Orlando
 VANDERBILT: Nick Howell replaces Jesse Minter
 VIRGINIA: John Rudzinski replaces Nick Howell
 VIRGINIA TECH: Chris Marve replaces Justin Hamilton
 W KENTUCKY: Tyson Summers replaces Maurice Crum J
 WAKE FOREST: Brad Lambert replaces Lyle Hemphill
 WASHINGTON: William Inge / Chuck Morrell replaces Bob
 Gregory / Ikaika Malloe
 WASHINGTON ST: Brian Ward replaces Jake Dickert

Head Coach Changes for 2022

Akron New Coach: Joe Moorhead Career Record: 14-12
Former Coach: Tom Arth (three seasons) 2021 Record: 2-10 SU, 5-7 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Moorhead is an interesting hire for a program unaccustomed to big-name coaches. He had reasonable success as Mississippi State's coach in 2018-19 but takes over a Zips team that won a total of three games over the last three seasons. Moorhead, who was an offensive coordinator at Penn State in 2016-17, will assume that role for Akron, and that group needs serious improvement. The defense allowed 39.5 PPG last season. Better or worse in 2022? College Football News projects Akron to win about 3 games. PointsBet has yet to post a number on the Zips, but I wouldn't touch anything higher than 3. Moorhead could have a positive impact in Year 2 or 3.

Colorado State New Coach: Jay Norvell Career Record: 33-26 Former Coach: Steve Addazio (two seasons) 2021 Record: 3-9 SU, 4-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: In four seasons since its last bowl appearance in 2017, Colorado State is on an 11-29 slide. Obviously, Addazio didn't move the program forward in his two-year stint. Norvell could be a welcome change, as his Nevada teams were successful and entertaining over the last four seasons. Plucking a successful coach from within the conference is usually a plus. Better or worse in 2022? The Rams closed on a six-game skid in 2021, but they were only outscored by 4.6 PPG for the season. Norvell's offenses are creative and prolific, and he should put the program back on the right track. CFN projects 5.5 wins for the Rams, meaning they'll be better. I agree.

Connecticut New Coach: Jim L. Mora Career Record: 46-30 Former Coach: Randy Edsall (15 seasons) 2021 Record: 1-11 SU, 6-6 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Connecticut went back to the well with Edsall in 2017, hoping to rekindle the program's glory days. His latest tenure was a nightmare, however, with the team winning only seven games in four seasons (UConn opted not to play in 2020 amid the pandemic). A change was obviously in order, and the Huskies made a relatively big splash with Mora Jr. There's a ton of work to do to get back to respectability, but Mora has been successful at both the college and pro levels and has some experienced players returning. Better or worse in 2022? CFN's projection of 2.5 wins seems like a stretch, considering UConn will be heavy underdogs in all but two games. Assuming the Huskies defeat FCS CCSU, which is a big assumption, they would need to beat both UMass and FIU to reach the three-win mark. They lost to UMass by 14 in 2021, and it's reasonable to think FIU will rebound from last season's mess. I'll say 2-10 in Mora's first year.

Head Coach Changes for 2022

New Mexico State New Coach: Jerry Kill Career Record: 52-47 Former Coach: Doug Martin (nine seasons) 2021 Record: 2-10 SU, 7-5 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Besides a four-game interim stint at TCU last year, Kill's last head job was in 2015 with Minnesota. Kill had assistant positions with Rutgers, Virginia Tech and TCU since leaving Minnesota, and New Mexico State is far from the level of those Power 5 programs. The Aggies have played in one bowl game over the last 62 years and are 8-30 since that 2017 Arizona Bowl game. Kill's first transfer/recruiting class ranks 88th in the nation, an astounding success story for NMSU. Better or worse in 2022? Despite the good work done by Kill and his staff in the offseason, the Aggies only have one surefire win on the schedule (against Lamar). The Aggies beat UMass last year but face the Minutemen on the road this time. They'll be heavy underdogs in all other games. Despite CFN and ESPN projections of more than 3 wins, I have a hard time stretching to two.

Notre Dame New Coach: Marcus Freeman Career Record: 0-1 Former Coach: Brian Kelly (12 seasons) 2021 Record: 11-2 SU, 9-4 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Freeman has made a quick ascension in college football, and I'm not a huge fan of that, particularly at a program such as Notre Dame. That said, he scored the nation's No. 1 recruiting class, a sign that top players are embracing his player-first style. The 36-year-old has challenges ahead, including heavy personnel losses and a difficult schedule. Better or worse in 2022? Freeman inherits a pretty solid roster, although a rebuilding effort on offense continues for a second straight season. Fewer than half of the snaps return on that side of the ball. Freeman is expected to turn to highly rated QB Tyler Buchner, who has thrown just 35 passes in mop-up duty. ESPN puts the win projection at 9.1 and CFN has it at 9, while the PointsBet prop is 9.5. With likely losses at Ohio State and USC bookending the schedule, the Irish will have to avoid slipping up against teams such as BYU, Clemson and Boston College to beat that number. Let's go Under for 2022, but the future looks bright.

Oklahoma New Coach: Brent Venables Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Lincoln Riley (five seasons) 2021 Record: 11-2 SU, 6-6 ATS Steve's Thoughts: It was only a matter of time before Venables graduated from a highly successful run as Clemson's defensive coordinator to a headcoaching job at a national power. The architect of a stout Tigers defense from 2012-21, he was also DC at Oklahoma for 13 seasons. With Venables, the Sooners are making a major directional change from the offensiveminded approach of Riley. We'll see if it can

Duke New Coach: Mike Elko Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: David Cutcliffe (14 seasons) 2021 Record: 3-9 SU, 4-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Duke won three bowl games during Cutcliffe's 14-year run, but the era ended with a three-year bowl drought and a 10-25 slide. Elko, most recently the defensive coordinator at Texas A&M, takes over for the Blue Devils, and his top priority will be improving a defense that allowed 39.8 PPG last season. Duke is near the bottom in the nation in returning experience, which could be a good thing in the long run. Better or worse in 2022? Until Elko demonstrates he can bring in some high-level recruits, the rebuilding job in Durham will be arduous. PointsBet posted the win prop at 3.5. Knowing what I know from my Stability Ratings, a new coach, new coordinators and little returning experience often equals continued struggles. Let's go Under.

Florida New Coach: Billy Napier Career Record: 40-12 Former Coach: Dan Mullen (four seasons) 2021 Record: 6-7 SU, 3-10 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Napier is the latest successful Group of 5 coach to ascend to the big time. His Louisiana team was 13-1 last season and won the Sun Belt. Napier has also spent time in the Clemson and Alabama programs, so he's been around elite college football. Things got ugly for Florida last year, both on and off the field. However, four of the Gators' seven losses were by seven points or less. With the way the program recruits, Florida could be poised for an immediate rebound. Better or worse in 2022? PointBet's win prop is 7.5. CFN projects 8.5. I'll play the Under, however. Florida's first two games are against Utah and Kentucky, when the Gators will be at the height of their instability. They also have games at Tennessee, Texas A&M and Florida State, plus Georgia on a neutral field. They would have to win two of those six games to even have a chance at going Over.

Florida International New Coach: Mike MacIntyre Career Record: 46-65 Former Coach: Butch Davis (five seasons) 2021 Record: 1-11 SU, 3-9 ATS Steve's Thoughts: FIU went 1-16 in the last two seasons under Davis, and you have to assume the program bottomed out. In steps MacIntyre, who served as head coach at San Jose State from 2010-2012 and at Colorado from 2013-2018. After that, he was a defensive coordinator at Ole Miss and Memphis. FIU needs obvious work on the defensive side, having allowed nearly 40 PPG last season. The team is in the bottom half for returning experience, which could be a good thing considering how poorly things have gone. Better or worse in 2022? Again, nowhere to go but up, and CFN projects 3.5 wins. FIU plays one of the weakest

raise this program to a new level, as OU defenses have allowed fewer than 25 PPG just once in the last six seasons. Jeff Lebbey takes over the offense after leaving his OC post at Ole Miss. Better or worse in 2022? The PointsBet prop is set at 9.5. CFN has the Sooners going Over by about a half-game, while ESPN leans Under by about the same margin. There are no major non-conference challenges on OU's schedule, and in the Big 12, Texas seems to be the only team on OU's level in terms of talent, as Oklahoma State lost a ton of production on both sides of the ball. I'll call for an 11-1 record and an Over, as an improved defensive concept should be a big benefit in this conference.

Oregon New Coach: Dan Lanning Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Mario Cristobal (four seasons) 2021 Record: 10-4 SU, 5-9 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Like Freeman at Notre Dame, Lanning arrives at Oregon after taking a rocket ship up the college football ladder. He is best known as the DC of Georgia's national championship team, which produced multiple first-round picks on the defensive side. He also gets a pretty good assignment at Oregon, a program coming off of a 10-win season that's again expected to compete for a conference title. Lanning's first transfer/ recruit class ranks just 20th, but QB Bo Nix, the former Auburn star, is part of that class as a transfer. Better or worse in 2022? The PointsBet prop is 8.5, somewhat modest considering the Ducks topped that number in each of the last three full seasons. There are some tricky spots on the schedule besides tough games against Georgia and Utah. My Stability Ratings point to the first four games as a danger area, and Oregon plays BYU and at Washington State in Weeks 3 and 4. I'll go Under the 8.5.

SMU New Coach: Rhett Lashlee Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Sonny Dykes (four seasons) 2021 Record: 8-4 SU, 6-6 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Lashlee was SMU's offensive coordinator in 2018-19 before leaving for the same position at Miami. The Mustangs scored 41.8 PPG in his second season as OC, and now he gets to build on the momentum for what has become a successful program (25-10 in the last three seasons). SMU, which scored 38 PPG last year, returns 79% of its on-field production, including starting QB Tanner Mordecai. Better or worse in 2022? ESPN's FPI ranks SMU as the 56th-best FBS team. Do I see the Mustangs winning eight games again? Probably not. They started 7-0 last year but lost four of their final five games. Four of their first five games on this year's slate are fairly tough, and the beginning of the season is when teams with new coaches usually stumble. Let's call for 7-5, even though the AAC won't be as tough as a season ago.

non-conference schedules I've ever seen, and coming up with a win in Conference USA on any given week is always possible. FIU might not be much better, but the record should be.

Fresno State New Coach: Jeff Tedford Career Record: 108-71 Former Coach: Kalen DeBoer (two seasons) 2021 Record: 10-3 SU, 8-5 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Fresno State fans and bettors should be quite familiar with Tedford, who went 26-14 and won two bowl games from 2017-19 in his first stint with the program. Though Tedford is known for his offensive mind, the 2017 and 2018 Bulldogs had the best defensive teams in the program's history. The Bulldogs won 10 games last season and should continue to be one of the top teams in the Mountain West. Prolific QB Jake Haener returns for his final college season to lead an experienced group. Better or worse in 2022? CFN projects a modest 8 wins for the Bulldogs, who have almost 80% of their on-field production returning after a 10-3 season. This is not a team I consider unstable, as Tedford is familiar with the job. There are some challenges on the schedule, but the only game I consider a probable loss is at USC. I think 9-3 or even better is not out of the question.

Georgia Southern New Coach: Clay Helton Career Record: 46-24 Former Coach: Chad Lunsford (five seasons) 2021 Record: 3-9 SU, 6-6 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Yes, this is the same Clay Helton who coached at USC last season. He takes a step back to a Sun Belt program that had a surprisingly poor season in 2021 after a three-year stretch in which it won two bowl games. Helton is the biggest name to ever lead Georgia Southern, so perhaps the program is looking to hit a grand slam in the recruiting department. The initial returns aren't great, with a combined transfer/ recruiting ranking of 112 in 2022, but the Eagles did score a four-star player and former Buffalo starting QB Kyle Vantrease. Better or worse in 2022? In terms of returning on-field production, Georgia Southern ranks sixth in the nation. Last year's 3-9 mark was a massive disappointment, considering GSU had 16 starters back from its 2020 team that went 8-5. CFN projects 5.5 wins, and I think that's conservative. With returning experience and a recent winning pedigree, Helton might be set up for one of the biggest bounce-back seasons of any team.

Hawaii New Coach: Timmy Chang Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Todd Graham (two seasons) 2021 Record: 6-7 SU, 5-7 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Maybe you remember staying up late and watching Chang, the record-setting quarterback of the Rainbow Warriors from 2000-04. He threw for more than 17,000 yards and played in three

TCU New Coach: Sonny Dykes Career Record: 71-63 Former Coach: Gary Patterson (22 seasons) 2021 Record: 5-7 SU, 2-9 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Dykes revived the SMU program over the last four years and hopes to do the same for the Horned Frogs, who haven't won more than seven games in a season since 2017. He'll have a good amount of experience back, as TCU ranks ninth in returning production. TCU underachieved in 2021 — other than an upset win over Baylor — as it returned 18 starters from the 2020 team that went 6-4. Better or worse in 2022? TCU is a candidate for a turnaround season, but that doesn't mean it'll be easy. Both ESPN and CFN project 6.5 wins. I think that's an underestimate and feel the Horned Frogs could be a surprise team in the Big 12.

Temple New Coach: Stan Drayton Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Rod Carey (three seasons) 2021 Record: 3-9 SU, 2-10 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Drayton, who spent the last five seasons as the running backs coach and running-game coordinator at Texas, has been coaching at the pro and college levels since 1993. This will be his first head-coaching job, though, and it won't be an easy one after Temple flatlined the last two seasons — winning a combined four games — after playing in a bowl game in each of the previous five seasons. Last year's team was relatively inexperienced and this year's version will be a little better off, ranking in the top half of the nation in returning production. Temple was outscored by a 21.2 PPG last season, though, and seems to be a long way from returning to a bowl game. Better or worse in 2022? The Owls are projected as the worst team in the AAC by CFN and ESPN. Don't expect much in 2022.

Texas Tech New Coach: Joey McGuire Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Matt Wells (three seasons) 2021 Record: 7-6 SU, 7-5 ATS Steve's Thoughts: McGuire spent the first 22 years of his coaching life at the high school level in Texas before becoming an assistant at Baylor in 2017. As an assistant head coach for the last three seasons, he played a big part in Baylor's 12-2 run last year. Texas Tech has failed to reach the eight-win mark for eight straight seasons. After years of offensive-minded coaches, the Red Raiders turn to McGuire, who has spent almost his entire career on the defensive side. There is some momentum to build on, as Texas Tech won its bowl game over Mississippi State by 27 points as a double-digit underdog. The Red Raiders scored three other outright upsets en route to their first bowl game in four seasons. Better or worse in 2022? McGuire's first recruiting/transfer class ranks 47th, behind six Big 12 schools. His returning production ranks 90th. Both CFN

bowl games. However, Chang's highest level of coaching experience was as a position coach for Nevada from 2017-21. Chang brings hype to Hawaii, but the rest is up in the air. Better or worse in 2022? The only team that returns less on-field production than Hawaii is Chang's former team, Nevada. CFN has Hawaii pegged for 6 wins, and I think that's overzealous. A six-win season would mean this year's team is as good as the 2021 version. No way. The Warriors play 13 games, but I'm hard-pressed to find four wins. Louisiana Tech

New Coach: Sonny Cumbie Career Record: 1-3 Former Coach: Skip Holtz (nine seasons) 2021 Record: 3-9 SU, 4-7 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Louisiana Tech winning just three games last year was stunning. The program had a solid group of returning starters from its 2020 team that went 5-5, and Holtz won at least four games in each of his first eight seasons atop the program. Cumbie, who went 1-3 as Texas Tech's interim coach last year after Matt Wells was fired, has been an offensive coordinator for Texas Tech and TCU. Better or worse in 2022? The Bulldogs rank in the bottom 30 for returning production, and I don't like the negative momentum after the team lost four of its final five games as favorites. CFN projects 6 wins, and I find that generous. I'll say closer to four.

Louisiana-Lafayette New Coach: Michael Desormeaux Career Record: 1-0 Former Coach: Billy Napier (four seasons) 2021 Record: 13-1 SU, 7-7 ATS Steve's Thoughts: The Louisiana program is in a good spot, and Desormeaux, who helped put it there as an assistant coach from 2016- 21, stands to benefit as he steps into the top spot. Desormeaux led the Ragin' Cajuns to a New Orleans Bowl victory after Napier took the Florida job, and this should be a fairly seamless transition. Desormeaux's biggest challenge will be rebuilding a team that lost a lot of experience, including multi-year starting QB Levi Lewis. ULL ranks 126th in returning production. Better or worse in 2022? While I don't expect the Ragin' Cajuns to fall completely off the map, there are plenty of Sun Belt teams ready to take their shot at a weakened ULL program, which has dominated the conference the last three seasons. CFN still projects 8 wins, but with such a large loss of personnel, the new staff has a bigger task than CFN's number indicates.

LSU New Coach: Brian Kelly Career Record: 146-61 Former Coach: Ed Orgeron (six seasons) 2021 Record: 6-7 SU, 5-7 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Kelly has had an immediate impact on the roster, with a recruiting/transfer class that ranks sixth in the nation. He plucked former Arizona State starting QB Jayden Daniels, a dynamic playmaker who should be able to instantly improve an offense that failed

and ESPN project Texas Tech to finish .500 at best. I'll call for a lesser mark.

Troy New Coach: Jon Sumrall Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Chip Lindsey (three seasons) 2021 Record: 5-7 SU, 4-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Sumrall, another under-40 former assistant, built his resume by helping Kentucky revive its defense over the last three seasons. He steps into a program that won exactly five games in each of the last three straight seasons (after three straight years with double-digit wins). Sumrall gets a good amount of production back (17th nationally) but struggled with his first recruiting class (111th). Better or worse in 2022? Both CFN and ESPN have the Trojans finishing at least .500. In my opinion, it would take an upset or two to get to that bowleligible level. I'll call for fewer than six wins.

UAB New Coach: Bryant Vincent Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Bill Clark (six seasons) 2021 Record: 9-4 SU, 10-3 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Bill Clark did an amazing job for UAB, rescuing the program from near demise. Since the program went without fielding a team in 2015 & 2016, the Blazers are 42-20, and rightfully it became Clark's decision on when to retire. He chose to do so this spring with the prospects looking bright for 2022 and interim coach Bryant Vincent, who takes over the head spot for this fall after serving as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. He gets 14 starters back from the Independence Bowl winning team of last season, including QB Dylan Hopkins. Better or worse in 2022? This should be a relatively smooth transition, and had it appeared otherwise, I'm not sure Clark would have chose to leave when he did. UAB should be among the favorites to win Conference USA and matching the 9-wins of 2021 should be the minimum goal.

USC New Coach: Lincoln Riley Career Record: 55-10 Former Coach: Clay Helton (seven seasons) 2021 Record: 4-8 SU, 4-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: It was the move by Riley to USC that truly started the coaching carousel in late 2021, and it got the transfer portal spinning too, as Riley scored his former Sooners QB Caleb Williams a bit later in the process. With Riley's accomplishments at Oklahoma and his ability to bring in big-time recruits, the expectations at USC are off the charts. That the Trojans went just 4-8 last season seems to have been completely erased from memory. Riley's first recruiting/transfer class ranks in the Top 10, and that should ease any concerns about the lack of returning experience (94th nationally). Better or worse in 2022? CFN projects 9 wins, while ESPN is noticeably lower at 7.9. The PointsBet win prop sits right in the middle at 8.5. I stand on the more optimistic side, as Riley's offenses have been explosive and Williams

to reach the 28-point mark in any of its last six games. The Tigers always have dynamic players on the other side of the ball. Better or worse in 2022? ESPN's FPI ranks LSU as the No. 11 team in the nation, with a 7.7-4.4 record projection. The Tigers are improved, but enough to win 7.5 of their 12 regular-season games? Not so sure about that. I'm concerned about the instability factor in the first four games, which is when rebuilding teams tend to struggle. A loss in either the neutral-field opener versus Florida State or Game 3 against Mississippi State would make reaching eight wins tough against a very difficult schedule.

Massachusetts New Coach: Don Brown Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Walt Bell (three seasons) 2021 Record: 1-11 SU, 4-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Massachusetts is in college football purgatory right now. Considering UMass has won just two of its last 30 games — the program has won fewer than five games every year since 2011 — there doesn't figure to be much pressure on Brown. His first recruiting/transfer class ranked better than 38 other teams, so perhaps it's a start. UMass ranks fourth in the nation in returning production. Better or worse in 2022? Despite some positive signs, it's difficult to project even a single win for a team such as Massachusetts. The Minutemen don't play the toughest schedule, but their FCS game is against a solid Stony Brook team and their easier FBS games are on the road. ESPN still projects 3.3 wins, while CFN says 2. I lean closer to the latter, but think better days are on the horizon.

Miami New Coach: Mario Cristobal Career Record: 62-60 Former Coach: Manny Diaz (three seasons) 2021 Record: 7-5 SU, 6-6 ATS Steve's Thoughts: You probably know Cristobal best from his four-year stint at Oregon from 2018-21, but the Hurricanes job is what he's always wanted. Cristobal is a Miami guy: He played there (winning two national titles as an offensive lineman in 1991-92) then coached there (at different levels in the program for six seasons). How far has the program fallen and how quickly can he turn it around? Miami has only one season with doubledigit wins since 2003, and there isn't a whole lot of returning experience this season. Cristobal's first recruit/transfer class ranks just 24th, but he does have his QB of the future in Tyler Van Dyke, who led a vastly improved offense after taking over for D'Eriq King. Better or worse in 2022? The PointsBet win prop and ESPN's projection are both 8.5. Looking at the schedule, a 3-1 start seems almost automatic and should propel Miami to at least an 8-4 finish, but I'm not ready to call the win total either way.

will instantly improve the quarterback position. USC's early schedule is relatively easy and the Trojans could be 4-0 entering October. I see at least nine wins and an Over.

Virginia New Coach: Tony Elliott Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Bronco Mendenhall (six seasons) 2021 Record: 6-6 SU, 7-5 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Virginia is coming off of back-to-back .500 seasons and turns to Elliott, the former Clemson offensive coordinator. As OC or co-OC for the Tigers over the last seven seasons, Elliott has seen big-time football and is familiar with the workings of the ACC. Elliott has a talented quarterback to work with in Brennan Armstrong, who isn't Trevor Lawrence or Deshaun Watson but threw for nearly 4,500 yards and 31 TDs last season. Better or worse in 2022? Despite Armstrong being back, Virginia ranks 123rd in returning experience. The Cavaliers also lost their final four games to fall short of a bowl bid. Both ESPN and CFN project Virginia around 7 wins. The PointsBet prop is 7.5. I'll call for an Under, with Armstrong good enough to get this team to seven wins but more likely six due to the inexperience factor.

Virginia Tech New Coach: Brent Pry Career Record: 0-0 Former Coach: Justin Fuente (six seasons) 2021 Record: 6-7 SU, 5-8 ATS Steve's Thoughts: Pry, the former Penn State defensive coordinator, gets his first head-coaching assignment at Virginia Tech. The Hokies opened last season with an upset of No. 10 North Carolina but ended it with an embarrassing 54-10 bowl loss to Maryland. In between, the Hokies were upset losers three times. Pry's first team brings back a mid-level amount of experience but didn't score well in the recruiting department. Better or worse in 2022? The PointsBet win prop is a modest 5.5, and CFN calls for the Hokies to blow past that number, projecting 7.5 wins. In a weakened ACC, I think this is an Over play, too, and feel this team will be a bowl qualifier.

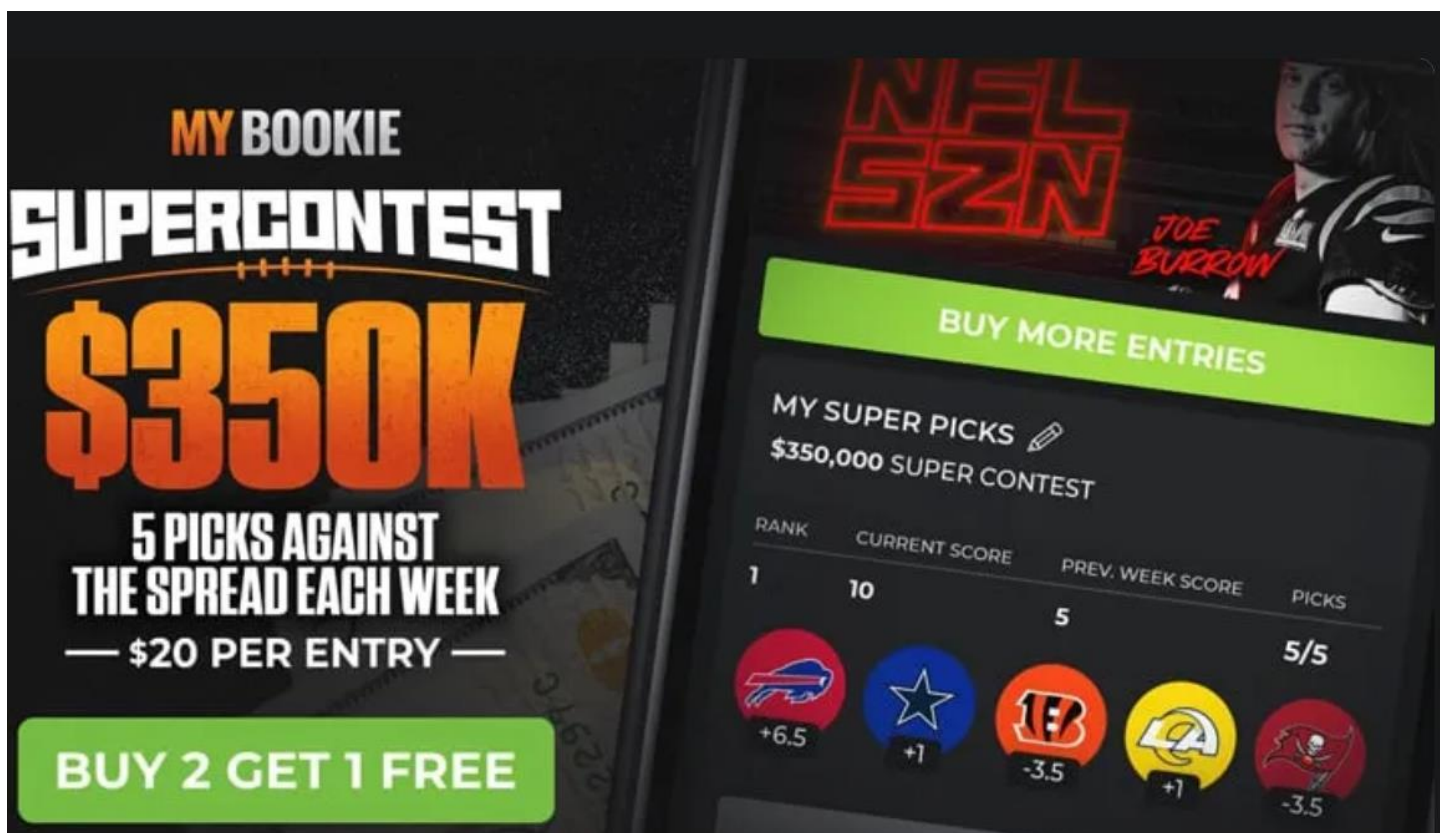
Washington New Coach: Kalen DeBoer Career Record: 12-6 Former Coach: Jimmy Lake (two seasons) 2021 Record: 4-8 SU, 3-9 ATS Steve's Thoughts: DeBoer capitalized on a strong season at Fresno State to make a quick rise to the Pac-12 after just two years in FBS. You can't blame DeBoer for jumping at the chance for a high-profile job in Washington, but it won't be easy resurrecting a program coming off of its worst season in 13 years. The Huskies opened by losing as 22.5-point favorites against Montana and finished by being walloped by Washington State 40-13. In between was forgettable. Better or worse in 2022? The early returns for DeBoer leave a lot to be desired, as his first recruit/transfer class ranks 70th. His returning

Nevada New Coach: Ken Wilson Career Record: 0-0
 Former Coach: Jay Norvell (five seasons) 2021 Record: 8-5 SU, 8-4 ATS
 Steve's Thoughts: Norvell seems to have picked the right time to leave Nevada after a multi-year run of competing for titles in the Mountain West. Not only are the Wolf Pack losing QB Carson Strong to the NFL, they are returning the least amount of production in the nation. In steps Wilson, whose upper-level college coaching experience includes just one year as the co-defensive coordinator at Oregon. Prior to that, he was a linebackers coach for Oregon and Washington State. In other words, this is a pretty big jump. Better or worse in 2022? ESPN and CFN put Nevada in the area of 6-6.5 wins, an optimistic view. The Wolf Pack have lost a lot of talent, and after a soft start to the schedule, things get a lot tougher. I'm calling for six wins maximum, with a bowl bid equating to a highly successful season.

experience ranks 36th, a group that includes Indiana transfer QB Michael Penix Jr. Both ESPN and CFN project about 7.5 wins, same as the win prop at PointsBet. I'm going to lean Under based on the level of dropoff last season. I think seven wins is possible, with home games against Michigan State and Stanford in Weeks 3 and 4 being the key momentum generators.



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