

BYU

Coaching-BYU hired 4 new assistants mainly on the defensive side of the ball led by new DC Jay Hill. I thought Jay Hill was a Top 10 head coach in the FCS (Weber St) and prior to that stint he was a long-time Utah assistant. It's one of the better coordinator hires of the off-season that no one is talking about.

QB-BYU brings in former USC/Pitt QB Kedon Slovis to be the starter. I'm not a big fan but he has plenty of experience at the Power 5 level. The starters (1st offense vs 1st defense) only went "thud" for 25 plays so I didn't get a good look on Slovis. Bowl game starter Sol-Jay Maiava-Peters did not play. They brought in Juco transfer Jake Retzlaff who was running with the "2's". He made some plays and I thought freshman Ryder Burton showed confidence and a strong arm. No. 15 Nick Billoups had the highlight of the day on a long TD run where he ran over a defender.

RB-Former Louisville/UNLV RB Aidan Robbins is expected to be the starter but he did not play. Hinckley Ropati was the starter and has good size (215 pounds). Miles Davis has more explosiveness which is lacking among the BYU skill positions. Depth guy Nukuluve Helu had a bunch of good runs later in the scrimmage.

WR-Kody Epps did not play. He is expected to be a starter along with Keanu Hill and Chase Roberts who are both 6-foot-4. Again, I didn't get a good look from the first teamers but backup Hobbs Nyberg flashed a few times. I do think one of the biggest weaknesses on the team is the lack of play-making ability down the field. I think BYU needs to get a WR or two this summer in the transfer portal that can take the top off a defense.

TE- I did not see starter Isaac Rex in there. Masen Wake got the snaps with the first team. I liked what I saw from backup No. 85 Anthony Olsen.

OL-One of the biggest take-aways from the whole game was the size of this unit. From left to right it was Kingsley Suamataia (6-6 315), Tyler Little (6-7 295), Connor Pay (6-5 312), Brayden Keim (6-8 310) and Ian Fitzgerald (6-5 305). The coaches really like Suamataia at LT (4-star former Oregon recruit). They're young, but huge. No. 79 Kaden Chidester towered over the other backups (6-8!) later in the scrimmage. I think they'll be one of the best OL's in the Big 12...in 2024.

DL-Tough to get a good look when it was just "thud" for the starters. Jackson Cravens, Tyler Batty, John Nelson, Atunaisa Mahe and Joshua Singh were in the two deep. I didn't see Caden Haws in there. The announcers think Boise St transfer Isaiah Bagnah can give them some needed pass rush. Bodie Schoonover flashed a bit. Overall, they have decent size, not a lot of explosiveness.

LB-Ben Bywater, Max Tooley and Chaz Ah You did not play so once again, not a good look from this unit. Ace Kaufusi and Ammon Hannemann were two guys that stood out.

DB-CB Jakob Robinson had a nice interception. S Micah Harper, CB Caleb Christensen, CB Eddie Heckard and S Preston Rex got the most snaps with the "1's". I didn't see Talan Alfrey.

Overall-Sometimes you get a good look from a spring game and sometimes you don't. With so many starters out and with the first-teamers only going "thud", this wasn't an informative watch. I do think BYU needs many more athletes on the perimeter than what they have. Can they address some of it in the transfer portal this summer? Sure, but I think this is more of a 2-year fix or longer through what has to be improved recruiting. BYU has routinely played 4-5 Power 5 schools each year since they went Independent more than a decade ago. BYU was 24-30 SU in those games (1-8 vs rival Utah). However, now they play 10 Power 5 games including a road trip to Arkansas. I worry about depth as this was a team that struggled with injuries after playing front-loaded schedules in the past.

Auburn

Coaching-Obviously, Hugh Freeze is a big upgrade over the Bryan Harsin fiasco of the last two years. I like that Freeze kept Cadillac Williams on staff and Philip Montgomery (former Tulsa head coach and Baylor OC) was an underrated hire at OC.

QB-Robby Ashford is the starter and obviously showed his athleticism in the run game. Is he a much-improved passer? I don't know. The game was played in heavy rain so we didn't see much of a pass game at all. Freeze was complimentary of Holden Geriner and I could see him getting snaps later in the year. I do not see a pathway to playing time for TJ Finley. Freeze seemed exasperated with a couple of Finley's decisions in the game. Do the Tigers hit the transfer portal this summer? I could see it, but right now I expect Ashford to be the starter.

RB-The most impressive unit from the scrimmage. They got plenty of opportunities with the weather and the ball did not hit the turf. Jarquez Hunter will be the starter after sharing carries with Tank Bigsby the last couple of years. He only played one series. Damari Alston, Justin Jones, Brian Battie and Sean Jackson all ran hard. This is a deep and talented backfield. Freeze said he was pleased with what he inherited (did not say that with other units on the team).

WR-Did not get a good look as the pass game was limited in the rain. Ja'Varrius Johnson and Koy Moore are back and Cincinnati transfer Nick Mardner gives them some much needed size (6-foot-6) along with Landen King (6-foot-5). Multiple times it was mentioned Auburn will hit the portal hard this summer at this position. I agree. I don't see the play-makers to be a SEC West contender.

TE-Mainly used in the run block game led by FIU transfer Rivaldo Fairweather and Tyler Fromm. John Samuel Shenker was a loss in the receiving game.

OL-Probably the most pleasant surprise. The Tigers bring in 8 offensive lineman via recruiting and the portal. From left to right it was Dillon Wade (from Tulsa), Connor Lew (true freshman!), Avery Jones (from East Carolina), Kameron Stutts and Gunner Britton (from WKU). They got good push and looked like a cohesive unit. This was expected to be a possible weakness but I think they'll be fine this year.

DL-Watching some tape from last season, the Tigers are really going to miss Derick Hall on the edge. They do have some massive bodies in there including Jayson Jones (6-6 339), Stephen Johnson (6-3 341) and Jeffrey M'Ba (6-6 307). I really like Top 100 true freshman Keldric Faulk (6-6 275) at the Jack position along with Elijah McAllister. I did not see Marcus Harris in there and the Tigers also bring in Kentucky transfer Justin Rogers at DT.

LB-Didn't get a good look here and it should be noted, the front 7 was handled by the OL. Cam Riley and Wesley Steiner return. Robert Woodyard and Austin Keys (from Ole Miss) stood out to me.

DB-One of the more experienced secondaries in the SEC led by Keionte Scott, Zion Puckett, Donovan Kaufman, DJ James, Jaylin Simpson and Nehemiah Pritchett. Austin Ausberry, Cayden Bridges and Caleb Wooden all made some plays. However, the guy that stood out to me was freshman Kayin Lee who made a great pass break-up in the end zone. They have a lot of experience, but I don't see a lot of elite talent.

Overall-Freeze mentioned that the depth chart is not where they need to be to compete in the West and it will be interesting to see how many more transfers they bring in this summer. I do expect improved play from the Tigers this season but they're behind the Alabama's and LSU's of the world.

NC State

Coaching-Robert Anae is the new O.C. from Syracuse. He's a creative play-caller (but a little too pass happy for me) and obviously has experience working with Brennan Armstrong.

QB-I don't think there's much of a competition here. Brennan Armstrong will be the starter. Considering it was a heavy rain storm, I was surprised they decided to have Armstrong throw it 28 times in the first half alone. A couple of balls sailed on him and were intercepted. He did look like he was in command of the offense. MJ Morris had some trouble with snaps (rain) early but did rebound to make some nice throws late. Ben Finley is clearly the 3rd option.

RB-Starter Jordan Houston only got a couple of series. Demie Sumo-Karngbaye was predictably the 2nd RB in. Delbert Mims made a few plays in the run game. Nothing spectacular.

WR-Porter Rooks, Keyon Lesane and Anthony Smith got most of the reps with the starters. None of them really stood out and Smith had a horrible drop off a trick play that would have went for a TD. The talk of the game (and spring camp) was freshman Kevin "KC" Concepcion who really flashed in the second half. I wouldn't be surprised if he starts day one.

TE-The coaches really like 4-star freshman Juice Vereen (6-4 210) and will use him as a hybrid big WR/TE. Cedd Seabrough (6-4 245) is more of a traditional TE in terms of size and flashed a few times.

OL-From left to right it was Anthony Belton (6-6 336), Lyndon Cooper, Dawson Jaramillo (Oregon transfer), Anthony Carter and Timothy McKay as the starters. Dylan McMahon is an expected starter but did not play.

DL-Davin Vann had a forced fumble and fumble recovery and looks like the best player up front. Brandon Cleveland was in the starting line-up along with Travali Price. Cincinnati transfer Noah Potter really flashed. Coy Turnage is a really big boy at 6-4 350 but is more of a depth piece. Other guys who made plays include Red Hibbler (JUCO transfer) and Zyun Reeves. I don't see enough size on the front 7. If I'm Notre Dame (NC State hosts them in Week 2), I'd run right at the front.

LB-Payton Wilson did not play and he is the only returner among the Wolf Pack's top 6 tacklers on defense in 2022. Caden Fordham flashed on the first play of the game. Jaylon Scott was with the "1's" as was Devon Betty. Jordan Poole and freshman Kamal Bonner were two guys that were all over the field especially Poole.

DB-CB Shyheim Battle stood out with a "Pick 6" and a fumble recovery. Devan Boykin was in the lineup at nickel. Safeties Rakeim Ashford and Sean Brown were also running with the first-team. Darius Edmundson had a "Pick 6" for the backups.

Overall-It was tough to get a good look considering the rainy weather. I may be

in the minority, but I didn't like the fact they went pass-happy despite the horrible conditions. If they did that in the regular season, it would be negative-EV as evidence of the multiple "Pick 6's". I do like a couple of the incoming freshman led by WR Concepcion. New OC Anae will dial up some plays and Armstrong can sling it but NC State lacks play-makers. On the other side, DC Tony Gibson does a good job, but the Wolf Pack lose a lot on defense in 2023. I think they take a step back.

Vanderbilt

Coaching-I really like Clark Lea. He's cerebral. You can see the plan with what Vanderbilt is doing in recruiting especially on the defensive front 7. Unless the bottom falls out, I hope they give him 5 years.

QB-AJ Swann is your clear starter. He had an "up and down" game. Slow start, then made 2-3 really good throws early in the second half followed by a "Pick 6". He slipped late and was limping. It didn't look too serious. Ken Seals has a ton of experience and is a good backup for a program like Vanderbilt. Sophomore Walter Taylor (6-6 235) was a guy who flashed in the second half including a long TD throw.

RB-Patrick Smith was the starter. However, it was a pair of backups who really impressed me. Freshman Sedrick Alexander and sophomore Chase Gillespie should get plenty of carries in the fall.

WR-Quincy Skinner and Will Sheppard are your starters and Richie Hoskins also got plenty of reps with the "1's". Skinner got dinged up on the first play but rebounded and had a long TD reception in the second half (called back on a ridiculous taunting call). Speedster Jayden McGowan was also in there but got dinged on a punt return (slipped on the wet grass).

TE-Justin Ball looks like your starter and made a couple of plays.

OL-From left to right it was Gunnar Hansen, Delfin Xavier Castillo, Julian Hernandez, Bradley Ashmore and Junior Uzebu. They have experience but I thought the defensive front really controlled them.

DL-This was the unit that stood out to me not only in terms of production but also size. They have 5 guys in the two-deep that are 6-foot-6 or taller. Nate Clifton, Christian James and Devin Lee were the starters but Sophomore Darren Agu (6-6 255) is a guy to keep an eye on. They also bring in Stanford transfer Aeneas DiCosmo at EDGE. Clark Lea said it was the most-improved group in the spring and I couldn't agree more.

LB-Ethan Barr looked like the leader of the unit in getting everyone lined up but

he got dinged up. CJ Taylor was obviously with the "1's" and Tommy Eckels was also with the first team along with Nicholas Rinaldi. Bryce Cowan made some plays for the backups and I liked the way Langston Patterson "knifed in" on a couple of run blitzes.

DB-To me the best player on offense or defense was 6-4 220 pound Safety De'Rickey Wright. He had a "Pick 6" and was all over the field. He's a All-SEC type of player with his size and speed. CB Tyson Russell, CB Ja'Dais Richard and Jaylen Mahoney were also running with the first team. Backup Jeffrey Ugochukwu made some plays.

K-Something to keep an eye on but Will Faris missed a couple of FG's and an extra point. Lea seemed a bit concerned on the broadcast.

Overall-I think this Vanderbilt team is deeper and more talented than last year's team. I think the defense will be much improved and they won the scrimmage. I'm not sure the Dores match the 5-7 record from last year though. What I do know is the days of Vanderbilt being competitive in only 1-2 SEC games a year are over. I think they'll be competitive in 4-5 under Lea.

UNLV

Coaching-I really like the Barry Odom hire. He's an upgrade over Marcus Arroyo who I thought was overrated especially considering there was a bit of an out-cry on his firing. The hire I love is Brennan Marion at O.C. Odom originally hired Bobby Petrino but he left after a few weeks to Texas A&M. Marion has a lot of experience despite his young age (35) and runs a unique "Go-Go" offense that has triple option, spread and high-tempo principles.

QB-All of the QB's were inconsistent and turned the ball over too much. Doug Brumfield is the likely starter. However, I thought Jayden Maiava and Harrison Bailey moved the team better. Cameron Friel looks like the clear 4th team guy.

RB-Courtney Reese and Jordan Younge-Humphrey were the starters. Marion lines both of them up in the back-field at the same time usually on one side. It's a unique formation and effective.

WR-The strength of the offense without question. Ricky White, Senika McKee are known commodities with White being an All-MWC caliber player. I thought Zyll Griffin flashed a few times. However, the best player on the field was JUCO transfer Jacob De Jesus. He's a 5-foot-7 slot receiver who dominated. Under-recruited because of his size, but literally looked like Kansas St's Deuce Vaughn out there in the open field. The defense couldn't find him and when they did, couldn't tackle him. De Jesus caught passes in flat, down the field, made plays after the catch.

TE-Shelton Zeon returns and looks like the clear starter.

OL-Tough to get a good look from where I was sitting in the stands. Amani Trigg-Wright, Jack Hansz (Buffalo transfer), Tiger Shanks and Alani Makihele appear to be starters. Trigg-Wright was pulled later in the game for a dust-up. Lots of pre-snap and holding penalties. Unit looks like it needs work and maybe another transfer.

DL-Half the team had white jerseys with light gray numbers. Totally asinine to try and read numbers from the stands. No one stood out to me. This unit needs to hit the portal.

LB-Fisher Camac (6-7 240) is a big dude at OLB. Kyle Beaudry was in on a lot of plays.

DB-A lot of the newcomers impressed including Jalen Frazier (NC State), Jaxen Turner (Arizona), freshman Camren Jenkins and JUCO Jett Elad had a couple of interceptions. Leading returner Johnathan Baldwin flashed and Deago Albert made some plays. Easily the best looking group on the defensive side.

K/P-I thought punter Marshall Nichols had a solid day. Jose Pizano hit a 50-yarder but has big shoes to fill in replacing Daniel Gutierrez.

Overall-If the Rebels can get average QB play and fill some holes on the OL/DL via the transfer portal, I think they flirt with bowl eligibility.

Michigan

Coaching: Harbaugh seemed relaxed, was smiling, was very open in the pre-game interview. My take is that he knows he has a really good team.

QB: JJ McCarthy is a good QB. Very good arm. I just don't know if he's great and/or elite which leads me to believe he's a little overrated. Jack Tuttle did some nice things early but struggled later. Alex Orji is the most athletic but I question his passing ability. I actually liked how Davis Warren operated and moved the team.

RB: Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards were out. With Corum injured late in the year and Edwards less than 100%, I thought Michigan not having a 3rd RB really hurt them in the Illinois and TCU games. Keep an eye on freshman RB Benjamin Hall. He was ranked a 3-star No. 782 overall (55th RB) by 247 Composite. I'd argue that 500 spots too low. He showed patience in letting his OL set up blocks (rare for a frosh) and then had a quick burst at the line. Also

showed power at 235 pounds. Really good looking back and a nice change of pace. Mullings looked more comfortable than the end of last year (was primarily a LB last year).

WR: Maybe the weakest position group at least compared to the other CFB heavyweights. They need to find that Alpha in the room and I'm not sure they'll have it this year. Cornelius Johnson and Roman Wilson are nice No. 2 and No. 3 WR's on a championship-level team. Harbaugh mentioned the freshman Fredrick Moore and Semaj Morgan in the pre-game. They'll need one of them to step up. Peyton O'Leary was the game MVP. He probably deserves some snaps this year but honestly he should be like a 5th option on an elite team.

TE: Deep group even with the losses. I thought Colston Loveland started to really flash at the end of last season. I think he's All-Big 10 caliber as a sophomore and Indiana transfer AJ Barner will also be used heavily.

OL: Multiple OL sat out and there was some mish-mash of lineups on both teams. Tough to get a good look. My gut is they won't be as good as the last two years but still a Top 10-15 OL in the country.

DL: By far the most impressive group. They're deep and talented across the board. DT Kenneth Grant (356 pounds) was the first overall pick in the spring game draft. He lived up to that billing. Cam Goode (323 pounds) also flashed as a guy who didn't have much stats from last year. Rayshaun Benny (292 pounds) and Mason Graham (317 pounds) will also be productive along with returning starter Kris Jenkins. The Wolverines have a ton of EDGE guys. Coastal Carolina transfer Josaiah Stewart was mentioned by Harbaugh in the pre-game. He won't be an every down guy but should be lethal on 3rd-down pass situations. I love No. 8 Derrick Moore (high 4-star kid last year). He made several plays. Returning starter, Jaylen Harrell is another guy who flashed. Outside of the CFB superpowers the last 5-6 years (Bama, UGA, Ohio St, Clemson), I'm not sure I've seen a better-looking DL group.

LB: With Junior Colson and Michael Barrett back, who is going to be that 3rd LB? I really liked what I saw from Nebraska transfer Ernest Hausmann (No. 15). He ran sideline to sideline very well. Looked like an All-Big 10 caliber LB.

DB: The Wolverines are set at 3 of the 4 spots. Who is going to be that other CB opposite Will Johnson? Ja'Den McBurrows made some plays. The talk of spring camp has been Amorion Walker's transition to DB (from WR). He has great length but really struggled all game long. Peyton O'Leary beat him consistently. That 2nd CB spot is the biggest question on the defense.

Overall: The Wolverines are clearly a Top 4 team entering 2023 (UGA/Ohio St/Bama are the others). Considering what they return, what they've done to Ohio St the last two years and with the OSU game in Ann Arbor, Michigan

deserves to be the pre-season Big Ten favorite. They should be favored in all 12 games but their road schedule is difficult with no layups (Nebraska, Minnesota, Michigan St, Penn St, Maryland).