

2021 Spring Game Notes

Spring games can be a “hot topic” in the sports betting community on how much they really matter, if at all. Obviously, it’s just one practice out of 15 during the spring but it is usually played in front of fans inside the stadium with the most “game-like” situations. Personally, I’d rather watch them than not watch considering college basketball season is done, I don’t bet baseball and am involved very little with the NBA.

This season I watched more spring games (currently 46) than ever for a multitude of reasons. Basically it comes down to finally getting an opportunity to watch a lot of players for the first time. We didn’t have spring games last year. Teams played disparate schedules last year with 11 teams playing 4 games or less and 16 teams playing 12 games or more. Also a lot of incoming freshman didn’t play their senior seasons of high school.

A lot of people ask me can a spring game change your outlook on a team or change their power rating? The answer is 90% of the time I don’t do anything with a team’s power rating after watching their spring game. What I’m looking for in watching spring games is more about new players, new coaches and new schemes.

- Can the new starting QB throw back shoulder, an out pattern, vertically down the field consistently, etc.
- If the starting QB got hurt during the season, what’s the skill level of the backup QB’s?
- Can a defensive tackle/nose tackle move the point of attack and take up blockers.
- How do the LB’s move sideline to sideline.
- How deep is the team at WR?
- Can their secondary defend space?
- What do the new coordinators systems look like?
- What’s the overall vibe and energy around the team?
- How many starters are sitting out? Am I seeing the “real” team?

That’s what I’m specifically looking at when watching these games. So if I have a ton of question marks about a team and they answer most of them especially at QB, then I can bump up a team’s rating. If they don’t answer them and the QB(s) look bad then on rare occasions, I lower a team’s rating.

If there is a spring game I missed...send me the link please. My twitter handle is @bradpowers7 or email me on my website bradpowersports.com. Much thanks in advance.

SEC:

Alabama

- Head coach Nick Saban was mic’d up and was the star of the game in my opinion.
- Alabama loses a ton of skill position players and have four new offensive coaches led by O.C. Bill O’Brien (Texans) so my focus was more on the offensive side.

- New QB Bryce Young looked good. He is the clear leader after some pondered if there would be a QB battle between him and Paul Tyson.
- Obviously, Young is a better athlete than Mac Jones but he is also a better athlete than Tua from my eyes.
- The knock on Young is he is only 5-11 and I wonder if that will hurt him on a few plays especially against the likes of Georgia, Clemson and Ohio State.
- Saban mentioned several times that he really likes their RB's. That was notable considering Najee Harris is gone and Brian Robinson was out for the game.
- The break-out star was true frosh WR #17 Agiye Hall who made several big grabs.
- 6-5 250 lb TE Cameron Latu also showed great athletic ability on his long TD.
- After the game I wrote down that Alabama was probably one guy short at LB and WR. Maybe some of it had to do with WR John Metchie and LB's Christian Harris and Will Anderson sitting the game out. However, what does Saban do after spring? He grabs Tennessee LB Henry To'o To'o and Ohio St WR Jameson Williams from the transfer portal. Basically free agency for Bama with no salary cap. The gap is only going to get wider the next 3-4 years.
- Basically this team has very few weaknesses unless Bryce Young goes down.
- I have Alabama projected as a double-digit favorite in all 12 regular season games.

Arkansas

- **There's no Power 5 program that's improved more than Arkansas since 2019!** Remember they lost 20 straight SEC games coming into 2020 and also non-conference games to WKU, San Jose St, North Texas & Colorado St.
- The team looks like a borderline Top 25 team.
- I like their coordinators. DC Barry Odom is making \$1.75 Million a year, the highest paid assistant in Arkansas history.
- The team was running very high tempo under OC Kendal Briles.
- #1 QB KJ Jefferson will be an upgrade over Feleipe Franks.**
- #16 WR Treyton Burks is one of the best WR's in the SEC.
- Their 2nd best WR Mike Woods transferred to Oklahoma after the spring...that hurts.
- On defense, #1 safety Jalen Catalon is one of the best in the country. Plays bigger than his 5-10 198 pound frame.
- The RB's didn't wow me but 4-star frosh AJ Green hasn't arrived on campus yet. Coaches seem to think he can play immediately.
- Bowl game is doable this year. I'm between 5-7 and 6-6.

Auburn

- First, the audio levels on the broadcast especially for analyst Matt Stinchcomb were awful and he sounded like he mumbled the whole game. That irritated me.
- Obviously, new head coach for the Tigers in Bryan Harsin (Boise St). He doesn't have much experience in the South so I liked that he hired OC Mike Bobo and DC Derek Mason who have a ton of familiarity in the SEC and are former head coaches.
- Former head coach Gus Malzahn wasn't hitting the recruiting trail very hard the last couple of year and it shows.
- I don't see many playmakers at WR. Makes sense considering they just had two guys drafted in Williams and Schwartz.

- The coaches like their TE's...no one really stood out to me.
- RB Tank Bigsby is by far their best player but I came away impressed with the back-up #8 Shaun Shivers who runs really hard for 5-7 189.
- All 5 starters are back on the offensive line.
- QB Bo Nix has left a lot to be desired his first two years especially his downfield passing. I didn't see any improvement just like I didn't see much improvement from his freshman to sophomore seasons.
- I think it's a 6-6/7-5 type of season.

Florida

- No spring game. They had a 2-hour spring All-Access show on the SEC Network that was a waste of time for me.
- Would have liked to have seen the QB's.
- Practices were closed all spring and considering their NFL Draft losses, the Gators are a big unknown.

Georgia

- All eyes were on QB JT Daniels who didn't disappoint throwing for more than 300 yards. Big upgrade over what they had at the start of last season and Daniels looks even better than he did at the end of the year. Still, I'm not sure he is an elite QB. We'll know in Week 1 vs a great Clemson defense.
- Lot of eyes on the WR's especially with George Pickens hurt. #10 Kearis Jackson was his normal productive self and #5 AD Mitchell emerged.
- #0 TE Darnell Washington (6-7 265) was one of the most physically impressive players I saw all spring.** He is the definition of a Dude with a capital D!
- RB's looked good. #2 Kendall Milton ran hard. I really like #4 RB James Cook as a receiver out of the backfield vs a LB.
- UGA should have one of the best defensive lines in CFB led by #99 Jordan Davis who is 6-6 340. He's another guy that is one of the most physically imposing players I saw all spring.
- #15 Carson Beck looks like he will be the backup QB.
- I have UGA an underdog vs Clemson in Week 1. They'll be favored in every other game and are the clear favorites to win the East.
- Reminder that Kirby Smart is 52-14. Mark Richt started 52-13.

Kentucky

- No spring game.
- They had a 2-hour All-Access on the SEC Network but after the Florida one gave me nothing, I didn't bother to watch.
- They just lost one of their best recruiters to Michigan. Something to keep an eye on moving forward as the Wildcats have recruited and developed NFL talent very well the last 3-4 years.
- Would have liked to have seen the QB's with Wilson gone.

LSU

-All eyes on the QB's. Max Johnson and Myles Brennan are their clear Top 2 guys and it's a very close battle. I'd probably go with Max Johnson and start building towards a return to the Top 10 in 2022.

-I wrote down after watching the game, that I expect TJ Finley to transfer and he did.

-WR Kayshon Boutte is one of the Top 5 WR's in the country and showed it again. The question is can a No. 2 emerge? Jontre Kirklin certainly had the production with 17 receptions nearly 200 yards and a couple of TD's in the game

-LSU hasn't been dominant on the offensive and defensive lines like they were 10-15 years ago. However, defensive line looks like a strength this year (keep an eye on BJ Ojulari who could have a breakout season) and all 5 starters return on the OL.

-RB room was light this spring with only one main guy available in Tyrion Davis-Price.

-Tigers have two new coordinators in Jake Peetz who was with Joe Brady at Carolina last year. DC Daronte Jones wasn't Orgeron's first or second choice but coached with Dave Aranda at Wisconsin. Orgeron is clearly trying to rekindle that 2019 magic.

-Kicker Cade York is one of the best in the country.

-The Tigers will be much improved but still nowhere near as good as 2019. I'm thinking 8-4ish.

Mississippi St

-Year 2 under Mike Leach and there are still major question marks on how successful his offense can be in the SEC. The biggest thing is can Miss St show some semblance of a run game? Dead last in the FBS last year at 43.9 rush ypg.

-After LSU's idiotic (man-to-man) game plan by DC Bo Pelini in the opener, Mississippi St really struggled as teams rushed 3 and dropped 8.

-QB Will Rogers was the first true frosh to start at QB under Leach and he proved to be a better fit than KJ Costello. I expected to see improvement from him in the spring but he was given a patchwork OL and was pressured all day.

-Southern Miss transfer QB Jack Abraham looked good and can be a solid backup.

-One of the biggest surprises to me was #23 RB Dillon Johnson. He is neck and neck with #21 Marks who actually led MSU in catches last year with 60.

-They had defensive players who stood out to me at every level. I really like their NT #94 Jaden Crumedy. #3 Aaron Brule stood out among the LB's and #13 CB Emmanuel Forbes stood out again coming off a 5-interception season last year.

-WR #11 Spivey is physically impressive (6-5 240).

-Leach was pissed after the game and said it was their worst scrimmage.

-I watched the Washington St and Mississippi St spring games back-to-back and I came into it having the teams close power ratings wise. However, there remains a huge difference in athlete (size, speed, look) between mid-level Pac-12 and SEC teams.

-I still can't believe ESPN's FPI has Mississippi St in the Top 10 in the country. I have Miss St #7 in the SEC West and I have the Bulldogs around 6-6 this season! Still, they look like a Top 35-40 team as far as personnel.

Missouri

-Was one of the first spring games I watched back in late March.

- Steve Wilks (former Arizona Cardinals coach) is the new DC. Missouri will have more 4-down, more zone with single high safety.
- RB Larry Rountree is gone and the question is can 5-9 Tyler Badie handle a full workload in the SEC? #35 Michael Cox who is a big back ran hard.
- #6 WR Chism looks like their best player maker on the outside but that isn't saying much. They just don't have many guys that wow you at the skill positions and the team really struggled in the red zone in the game.
- Offensive line is a question mark.
- On the DL #91 Realus George (6-2 305 Juco) stood out physically.
- I like QB Connor Bazelak who will be improved this year after a solid freshman season.
- I also like head coach Eli Drinkwitz. I thought he did a really nice job last year getting Missouri to 5 wins.
- I think the Tigers are the 3rd best team in the East. That's not saying much and I think all 7 teams in the West are better than Missouri.
- I'd put their season win total in the 6.5-7 range.

Ole Miss

- Game was played in wet conditions.
- Fantasy players should be very high on WR #13 Braylon Sanders.** I expect a monster season out of him especially with Elijah Moore and Kenny Yeboah gone. They targeted Sanders deep on the first play. #1 Jonathan Mingo should also have a big year.
- It was tough to get a read on the RB's as most of them were out.
- Defense looked a little improved, but that's not saying much.
- QB Matt Corral, had a productive 2020 season, but also had a few games where he was a TO machine. He needs to be more consistent.
- I thought Kiffin did a great job last year and Ole Miss is in store for a good 2021. I have them in my top 25 power ratings and am thinking 8-4.

South Carolina

- New first-year coach in Shane Beamer who is bringing a lot of energy to Columbia but this is a major rebuild.
- 25% of the roster sat the game out.
- Defense really struggled tackling and the offense struggled in 3rd down and goal line.
- New OC Marcus Satterfield wants to huddle and will run a slower tempo. He is from the Matt Rhule coaching tree.
- WR looks like it is a weakness especially with Shi Smith gone. #5 Dakereon Joyner has to be the guy.
- TE Nick Muse is one of the better TE's in the SEC.
- QB Luke Doty looks okay...nothing special.
- RB's could be really good despite being down 3 scholarship RB's for the game. Kevin Harris (1,138 yards and 15 TD's in 2020) was out but the standout was #11 ZaQuandre White who ran really hard all game.
- The DL has some legit dudes from a physical standpoint including #11 Keem Green (6-3 315) and #90 Rick Sandidge (6-5 310).
- By far the best player on the team is DE Kingsley Enagbare. He is 6-4 260 pounds and I think he will be a first-round draft pick.**

-Schedule is tricky as games at East Carolina and home vs Troy aren't slam dunk wins. I'd put South Carolina's season win total around 3.5.

Tennessee

- It was chilly and rainy. However, that didn't stop new head coach Josh Heupel from running his high-tempo offense and throwing the ball down the field a ton.
- I wasn't a big fan of the job Heupel did at UCF as the team got worse each year but new AD Danny White was put in a bad spot.
- Obviously, all eyes were on the QB battle. **Harrison Bailey, while not the best fit for Heupel's system, is the most talented** and I'm not sure if it's close in that department. VT transfer Hendon Hooker needs more reps and Brian Maurer looks like a back-up.
- Obviously, Tennessee has some major question marks...RB talent is deficient with Eric Gray and Ty Chandler transferring. LB is a total mess.
- The WR corps is okay. Velus Jones and Cedric Tillman are solid players and #82 Coby Anderson (Juco) made some plays.
- Tennessee is fortunate with a weak schedule this year. Bowling Green, Tennessee Tech and South Alabama should be wins and South Carolina and Vanderbilt are in similar positions with first-year coaches. Those should be wins as well. Upset Pitt at home or upset Missouri/Kentucky on the road and the Vols can make a bowl. That should be the goal and it's doable.
- Best advice is betting individual Tennessee games OVER.** High-tempo, run a bunch of plays and sometimes put your depth-shy defense in bad spots.

Texas A&M

- Head coach Jimbo Fisher was mic'd up and he was the star of the game. However, he was so frustrated with his team in the second half that he took off the mic. The QB's who weren't supposed to be live got hit a couple of times.
- Speaking of the QB's, Haynes King is going to be your starter. Threw a bunch of good balls...he will eventually be an upgrade over Mond (maybe by next season).
- Zach Calzada is a capable backup.
- With an inexperienced offensive line, I think a moving pocket with some play action bootlegs will help both the young QB's and the OL.
- A&M had 15 guys out that would in their 2-deep so it was tough to get a great read.
- They've had a ton of injuries at TE but when healthy #85 Wydermyer is one of the best in the country.
- Kicker Caden Davis is also one of the best in the country. Drilled 52 and 55-yarders.
- I expect A&M will have one of the Top 10 defenses in the country.
- Receivers had several drops including #0 Ainius Smith who is the utility guy at RB/WR. #2 Chase Lane and #9 Hezekiah Jones are solid.
- #24 Earnest Crownover ran hard at RB. Speaking of RB's Spiller should be one of the best in the country even with an inexperienced OL.
- I have A&M favored in every game but one...home vs Alabama where the Aggies will be a double-digit dog.
- Compared to Alabama, Clemson and Ohio State, the whole operation just isn't there. Clock management issues, penalties. If A&M is going to take the next step, they need to clean those things up.

Vanderbilt

-I'm a fan of the Clark Lea hire and he made several "outside the box" type of hires to his staff. All 10 assistant coaches are between 34-43 years old and Vandy has one of the youngest assistant coaching staffs in the country.

-It was tough to follow individual players because the team wore plain jerseys with no numbers.

-I liked what I saw out of QB Ken Seals last year as a freshman and I expect him to be the starter this year. With that being said, Mike Wright played very well. He was mobile and accurate.

-Even with 4 of the top 5 WR's back, it was Will Sheppard who had a big game with 3 TD receptions.

-Temple transfer RB Re-Mahn Davis will be their starting RB.

-The defense was confused by the read option and didn't look great.

-After an 0-9 season, I would consider 3-9 to be solid progress.

Big Ten:

Illinois

-Illinois has a new head coach in Bret Bielema who obviously has familiarity in the conference with his success at Wisconsin. Still, his tenure at Arkansas left a lot to be desired.

-The most concerning thing to me was Bielema's tweet about "recruiting stars don't matter" this February. It is such an ignorant take that I question Bielema's coaching ability. That is not a joke.

-With that in mind, I think he inherited a better situation than what the market is going to price Illinois at this off-season.

-Illinois returns 21 Super Seniors. They are all on scholarship and that is more than any other Power 5 team in the country. They looked like a mature team (think BYU).

-QB Brandon Peters is one of those Super Seniors. He's 6-5 220 and looked like a pro as far as how he handled things. Remember, he was the No. 61 overall player in the country coming out of high school. He looks like a guy I will be betting on in the NFL preseason the next 5 years. **So if you're looking for a hot take, I think Peters will get drafted** (I don't see anyone calling for that now on the early draft boards).

-Backup QB Isaiah Williams looked improved but doesn't look like he will be a good fit in the new system. After spring, it was announced he is moving to WR.

-Speaking of WR's, #14 Brian Hightower has an impressive build (6-3 220) and is a former 4-star. He looks like the top WR. #86 Donny Navarro showed good speed and can be the slot.

-#2 RB Chase Brown looks like a guy that will be highly productive along with #23 Reggie Love and #22 Chase Hayden. Solid, deep RB corps.

-#87 TE Daniel Barker (6-4 250) also impressed me. He was their 2nd leading receiver last year.

-#82 TE Luke Ford made a great one-handed catch. He's a former highly touted 4-star who was the No. 51 overall player in the country.

-131 career starts are back on the OL.

- The defensive line has some dudes. #93 Calvin Avery is 6-2 335. #99 Owen Carney is 6-3 265 off the edge. Bielema mentioned him along with #92 Isaiah Gay.
- The fact that Illinois had several starters out and still had several quality guys surprised me. **After watching both Nebraska and Illinois, I hope I'm getting a nice number on the Illini at home on August 28th.**

Indiana and Iowa didn't have televised spring games. The two teams play in Week 1 and we will learn a lot about both from that game. Not sure I'll have a bet on it but it is one of the best games in an absolutely loaded Week 1 slate. I think both are Top 25 teams.

Maryland

- First, I am not a big fan of Mike Locksley. His tenure at New Mexico remains one of the worst I've seen in 3 decades of following CFB. His teams aren't disciplined and it again showed in this spring game. Penalties, drops, turnovers. He can recruit with the best of them, but I question everything else.
- At the top of the broadcast, Locksley did mention #1 WR Marcus Fleming (Nebraska transfer) and #2 WR Deajuan McDougale as two guys who have impressed this spring.
- Speaking of WR's...the Terps receiving corps is loaded! #7 Dontay Demus, #5 Rakim Jarrett are names you need to know.
- They really like their TE's and #9 Chigoziem Okonkwo is a guy that stood out to me. He didn't play last year due to myocarditis. #84 Corey Dyches also stood out.
- With that being said, the receivers put the ball on the ground way too much for my liking.
- QB Taulia Tagovailoa (Tua's brother) was the only scholarship QB on the roster so he played a lot. He was super accurate in 5-20 yard throws. Really looked good.
- RB #8 Tayon Fleet-Davis had one of the best catches I saw all spring and #4 Isaiah Jacobs ran hard.
- On defense, #11 Ruben Hyppolite stood out to me as did the size of #97 Sam Okuayinonu and #95 Lawtez Rogers.
- #33 CB Deonte Banks was around the football a lot as was #23 Gotay.
- A lot of players were out including 5-star true freshman Terrence Lewis who had an ACL injury.
- The Terps do have two new coordinators in OC Dan Enos and DC Brian Stewart. Ron Zook is also on the staff!
- I'd put the Terps season win total at 5.5. A bowl game is doable and that should be considered a very solid season.

Michigan

- No spring game open to fans, which coincided with a tightly controlled spring as far as media access goes.
- Wolverines are a huge unknown with a rebuilt staff that is the youngest in the Power 5. We'll know by Week 2 when they host Washington.

Michigan State

- Game was played in rain and it was half drills and half scrimmage.

- Head coach Mel Tucker was put in a very bad spot last year. Hired after signing day, COVID, no spring and had an inexperienced team. Very impressed that they beat Michigan and Northwestern even though the other 5 games were not good.
- They bring in 14 transfers this year!
- The guy you need to know is Wake Forest transfer RB Kenneth Walker who will be the starter. There's nowhere to go but up as the MSU RB's had ZERO rushing TD's.
- At QB it will come down to Payton Thorne or Temple transfer Anthony Russo. Too close to call for me on who will be the starter.
- The WR's impressed me. Jayden Reed is a name to know.** It is the first time Michigan St has had a player wear the #1 jersey since Charles Rodgers! He flashed several times. Jalen Nailor and Ricky White are also very solid.
- MSU brings back all 5 starters on the OL (151 career starts).
- On defense #86 DE Drew Beesley, #8 DT Simeon Barrow and #45 LB Noah Harvey stood out. I like Michael Dowell in the secondary.
- Not sure what to expect from a season win total but I'd put it in the 4.5 range. I'd rather bet them in individual games (starting in Week 1 at Northwestern).

Minnesota

- The Gophers are a team that will bounce back in 2021 after they regressed in 2020 and were hit hard by COVID.
- The offensive line returns 161 career starts. All of them are Seniors.
- WR #7 Chris Autman-Bell will be one of the best WR's in the Big Ten. However, outside of him...it is a young WR corps and they need to find some more play-makers. Frosh WR Lemeke Brockington flashed a little.
- RB #24 Mohamed Ibrahim sat out but he is one of the best RB's in the Big Ten. #1 RB Cam Wiley looked like a capable backup.
- QB Tanner Morgan regressed in 2020. I expect 2021 to be better but not at his 2019 great level (same goes for the team).
- Morgan's backup Zack Annexstad is a very capable backup. People forget that Annexstad beat out Morgan a few years ago but Annexstad has been dealing with injuries ever since.
- They feel the defensive line is the deepest group they've had. It starts with Clemson transfer DT Nyles Pinckney who flashed immediately.
- Even though I think the Gophers are a border-line Top 25 team as far as a power rating goes, I have them going 7-5.

Nebraska

- Obviously a big year for head coach Scott Frost who's been a disappointment so far.
- The game was mainly "thud" so it's tough to gauge on the team when you're not tackling to the ground.
- It was a physical spring as 43 different players were injured at some point.
- They feel the offensive line is the most improved unit on the team. It's the best since Frost has been there.
- Huskers are in need of some playmakers on the outside. They got a Montana transfer in Samori Toure who flashed a little. Oliver Martin should have a bigger role and Omar Manning looks like their most talented guy at 6-4 225 and was a 4-star out of high school.

- Will QB Adrian Martinez clean up the turnovers? His 15 lost fumbles in his career are the most in the FBS.
- #22 RB Gabe Ervin looks like their best guy in the backfield. At least until USC transfer Markese Stepp gets healthy. A Walk-on #0 Jaquez Yant ran hard in the game. The roster has him at 225, but he looked like he was at least 240.
- Speaking of walk-ons, it looks like Frost has accomplished his goal of restoring their great walk-on program. The overall size and strength of the team also looks like the best since he's been there. The problem is...this isn't 1997 anymore and games aren't solely won in the trenches. You need speed on the perimeter on both sides. You need a QB that can throw consistently down the field. Nebraska doesn't have any of this. Forget closing the gap vs Ohio State, they're still behind several programs in the West division.
- A nice surprise was true frosh QB Heinrich Haarberg. He is the first scholarship QB from Nebraska to play for the Huskers since 2001. He looks like the clear backup.
- The schedule is one of the toughest in the country. 6-6 has to be the goal but it's going to be tough getting there. The Illinois game in the opener is huge.

Northwestern didn't have a televised spring game. They are a "play-against" team early in 2021 due to their inexperience.

Ohio State

- All eyes were on the QB's and all of them looked good. My guess is CJ Stroud is your starter, Kyle McCord is the backup and Jack Miller transfers.
- This is the first time since 1952 that OSU enters the season without a QB who has thrown a pass at the college level.
- I can't emphasize this enough...the Ohio State WR corps is the best unit on any team that I saw this spring. Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson are the best WR duo in the country! Then you have Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Julian Flemming and Emeka Egbuka who are all 5-star WR's. Marvin Harrison Jr flashed big time in the spring game. Add that up and you're talking about a WR unit right up there with the 2019 Alabama WR corps as the best in CFB history!**
- On top of that, I consider true frosh DE #33 Jack Sawyer to be one of the best DE's in the country and he hasn't even played a down yet.** Sawyer is higher rated than both Bosa brothers and Chase Young coming out of high school and he flashed big time. He is built like a college junior.
- True frosh WR TreVeyon Henderson is also a 5-star recruit and flashed. He will make a good 1-2 punch with returning RB Master Teague.
- Paris Johnson moved to guard on the offensive line.
- The biggest question mark on the team is the LB corps where they lost everyone. Look for #3 Teradja Mitchell to step up and #35 Tommy Eichenberg made some plays.
- I project Ohio State to be favored in all 12 regular season games by more than a TD. I will be very surprised if they aren't in the playoffs again. **I will also be very surprised if they don't win a National Title in the next 3-4 years.**

Penn State didn't have a televised spring game. The Nittany Lions will be improved but I would have liked to have seen them especially considering they play at Wisconsin in Week 1. Same goes for **Purdue** who also didn't have a spring game I could watch. The

Boilers have an interesting Week 1 game vs Oregon State. Again, this year's Week 1 slate is the best ever.

Rutgers spring game is May 20th. I will post my thoughts next week.

Wisconsin will be improved this year and the Badgers are my favorite in the West. They have early season games vs Penn State and Notre Dame. I would have loved to be able to watch them.

Big 12:

Baylor

- 2020 was a tough first season for Dave Aranda, like most coaches.
- This year's team will be better but they are still a far ways off from what they were in 2019 when they made the Sugar Bowl.
- QB Charlie Brewer transferred to Utah. Big loss.
- I didn't like what I saw from the QB's. Jacob Zeno was inaccurate. Gerry Bohanon moved the team the best and Blake Shapen looked like a freshman. QB is a major question mark for them. I'd go with Bohanon.
- I did like what I saw from RB #1 Trestan Ebner. He should be their starter and was more of a utility guy last year rushing/receiving and in the return game.
- I also think Baylor has two solid WR's in RJ Sneed and Tyquan Thornton. The question is can someone get them the ball?
- On defense, there's no question who the standout was: #99 DT Siaki "Apu" Ika from LSU. He is listed at 6-4 350. I think he's one of the top DT's in CFB.**
- They had a lot of guys out on defense.
- The new OC is Jeff Grimes from BYU.
- Overall, I think it should be considered a very successful season if Baylor makes a bowl. I think 5-7 is most likely.

Iowa State didn't have a televised spring game. On paper, they should have their best team ever, but I think they'll be overrated in betting markets.

Kansas

- Yes, that's right. I watched a Kansas spring game.
- I like the Lance Leipold hire but it's a big negative that he didn't have spring with them. He did keep a bunch of the staff including the interim Emmett Jones.
- It was a physical camp.
- QB #3 Miles Kendrick took the first-team snaps but the competition will continue into the fall with #6 Jalon Daniels.
- The defense out-played the offense big time in the first half.
- #53 DE Caleb Taylor (6-2 257) stood out on several plays.
- Also #43 LB Jay Dineen, #99 DE Malcolm Lee, #1 S Kenny Logan, #20 CB Donovan Gaines and #2 CB Jacobee Bryant, #50 DL Marcus Harris, #14 Steven Parker all made plays for the defense who again dominated. It's not often that I can sit down and just focus on Kansas football so that's why I listed a bunch of guys.

-I liked what I saw from the RB's especially #23 Pesek-Hickson who ran hard. #20 Daniel Hishaw also had some nice runs.
-#8 WR Kwamie Lassiter looks like their best receiver.
-Even though I mentioned a ton of players, it was a tough watch and looked like the worst Power 5 team by far of the 40-plus spring games I watched.
-Kansas needs to beat South Dakota in the opener. The only other game I give them a chance in is at Duke.

No televised spring game for **Kansas State**. We'll learn a lot week 1 vs Stanford.

Oklahoma

-I think this could be the best OU team in a decade and a lot of it has to do on the defensive side of the ball.

-They have made some major strides the last couple of years going from allowing 33 ppg and 454 ypg in 2018 to 27 ppg and 356 ypg in 2019 to 22 ppg and 351 ypg last year.

They are even better this year returning their top 8 tacklers.

-In addition I was impressed with a true frosh safety Billy Bowman #5 and it was nice to see Caleb Kelly back from injury.

-The offense is loaded as they add in Tennessee transfer Eric Gray at RB and have a 1-2 punch with him and Kennedy Brooks.

-High 4-star frosh WR Mario Williams (No. 42 overall player in country) also flashed.

-The big position battle will be at center as Creed Humphrey is a big loss. Chris Murray and Andrew Raym are battling it out.

-The hottest take I have is while I think Spencer Rattler is the clear starter and he will have a good season, incoming 5-star QB Caleb Williams has more upside. He showed his play-making ability on the first snap on a speed option. I think he plays a little this year.

-I have the Sooners favored by more than a TD in every game. I'll be surprised if they're not in the CFB playoffs.

Oklahoma State and **TCU** both didn't have their spring games televised. I think both are border-line Top 25 teams.

Texas

-I like the Steve Sarkisian hire but it's going to take a couple of recruiting classes for Texas to become a Top 10 caliber team. Despite highly rated classes, my eye test says they aren't as talented or as deep as teams like Notre Dame, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, in addition to Alabama, Ohio State, Clemson, Georgia.

-I'll start with RB Bijan Robinson who is the best player on the team. How in the heck does he not get more carries last year? That was poor coaching. He's one of the best RB's in the country.

-Obviously, the QB position loses a 4-year starter but I don't think they'll take a major step back. Casey Thompson might be the opening game starter but Hudson Card has more upside.

-The defensive line got the best of the offensive line most of the game.

-#99 DL Keondre Coburn is a massive human being at 6-2 348.

- #5 DB D'Shawn Jamison had a long "Pick 6".
- #21 WR Troy Omeire needs to be healthy to give the Horns a weapon at WR.
- We'll know how good the Horns are by Week 2. Louisiana and Arkansas in the first two weeks are not lay-ups at all. I have Texas at 8-4 this year.

Texas Tech didn't have a televised spring game.

West Virginia

- It was announced during the game that head coach Neal Brown was extended through the 2026 season at \$3.98 million a year.
- It was an interesting game that was part scrimmage, part competitions.
- If you're looking for the best player on the team it is #55 DL Dante Stills. I also like #90 Akheem Mesidor on that DL. Solid unit.
- Alabama transfer #8 Vandarius Cowan finally looks healthy.** If he stays healthy, he will be an All-Big 12 performer on that defense.
- The WR unit also impressed me. #1 Winston Wright, #0 Bryce Ford-Wheaton and true frosh 4-star Kaden Prather all flashed.
- QB Jarret Doege looked improved but he took part in a QB skills competition and both QB's had shaky accuracy.
- It's a tough schedule starting with a road trip to Maryland in Week 1 and they also host Virginia Tech in non-conference play. That's 11 games vs Power 5 teams. Even though I think West Virginia is a border-line Top 30 team, I'd only put their season win total in the 6.5 range.

ACC:

Boston College

- I like head coach Jeff Hafley and I thought he did a great job last year.
- QB Phil Jurkovec needs to be more consistent. When he is on, he's a guy that will get drafted. He had two beautiful throws to WR Zay Flowers, who is one of the best in the ACC. Jurkovec also missed some passes.
- Backup QB Dennis Grosel looked like an improved player.
- Keep an eye on WR #84 Taji Johnson. He flashed several times and has good size.
- The Eagles return all 5 starters on the offensive line.
- True frosh OG Drew Kendall and CB Clinton Burton are 4-star players and flashed in the spring. Frosh OLB Donovan Ezeiruaku also made some plays.
- Speaking of freshman RB Xavier Coleman gives them some speed at the position. Something that has been lacking the last few years.
- I expect to see some more outside zone concepts instead of inside zone.
- Their most likely best player on defense didn't play in Jaiden Lars-Woodbey (Florida State transfer).
- The schedule is very manageable. If they beat Missouri in Week 4 at home, the Eagles will be 4-0 heading to Clemson. I'd put their season win total at 7.5.

Clemson

-The game had a different competitive spirit than most spring games I watched.

Very physical. Quality of play was better than a lot of CFB games I see in the fall.

-The team is loaded especially on defense where they return 10 starters.

-I love the defensive line especially Myles Murphy and Bryan Breese who are coming off great freshman seasons.

-#23 CB Andrew Booth is a player that is ready to break out nationally.

-On offense, even though they lose a generational QB in Trevor Lawrence and the ACC's all-time leading rusher in RB Travis Etienne, they have very good replacements.

-QB DJ Uiagalalei getting plenty of snaps last year was a blessing in disguise. He's already a Top 5 QB in the country.

-5-star True frosh RB Will Shipley is built like a junior and you can tell Dabo likes the other true frosh Phil Mafah who is a bigger back and ran hard.

-Some receiving options emerged including #11 WR Ajou Ajou and #85 TE Jaelyn Lay. Don't forget they still have Justyn Ross coming back from injury along with Frank Ladson, Joseph Ngata and EJ Williams. They're loaded!

-Bad news on injury front with backup QB Taisun Phommachanh going down late in the game. He tore his Achilles. DJ has to stay healthy this fall.

-I have Clemson projected to be a favorite in all 12 games. After the big opener vs Georgia, I have the Tigers favored by at more than 17 points in every game. I'll be very surprised if they aren't in the playoffs for the 7th year in a row.

Duke

-Field conditions were wet.

-Year 14 already for Cutcliffe who made an accurate statement in that "you're only as good as your two's coming out of spring."

-The Blue Devils had 39 turnovers last year on offense in 11 games. That's incredibly bad but also an opportunity to get much better by just improving in one area.

-Last year's starting QB Chase Brice transferred and it looks like #12 Gunnar Holmberg is going to be the starter. He is 6-3 205. His arm strength is 35-40% better than last year.

-Believe it or not, Duke does have some impressive looking players. Starting on defense with #42 LB Shaka Heyward. #9 Safety J'Marick Woods also looks the part at 6-3 215.

-I liked the WR corps led by #5 Jalon Calhoun, #19 Jake Bobo and #3 Darrell Harding.

-RB #21 Mataeo Durant should also be very productive.

-The concern should be the defensive line where they lose highly productive players in Chris Rumph and Victor Dimukeje, who were both drafted.

-I don't see a lot of wins on the schedule. I think 4-8 is about right.

Florida State

-One of the more intriguing teams in the country who should be much improved in year 2 under head coach Mike Norvell.

-Last year 75% of their roster was frosh/soph, the most in CFB.

-19 players made their first career start last year and 4 different QB's started.

-The Noles bring in 9 transfers led by DE Jermaine Johnson from Georgia who looked like the best player on the team.

-I was impressed with their two true frosh WR's Malik McClain and Joshua Burrell.

-#33 LB Amari Gainer flashed on defense and #1 Emmett Rice is a guy Senior Bowl NFL Draft analyst Jim Nagy really likes. #26 Kevin Knowles made some plays.
-On the defensive line, I thought #96 Joshua Farmer and #99 Malcolm Ray flashed. #6 Dennis Briggs also made some plays. It should be a solid FSU DL.
-The same can't be said for the offensive line, which remains a weakness and the RB's are just okay led by Jashaun Corbin.
-Finally, the QB's looked improved. I was very surprised with how effective McKenzie Milton was. He hadn't played in a few years after a severe leg injury at UCF. I think Jordan Travis will start but I expect both will play. Milton is more accurate with his downfield throwing and Travis is the better athlete.
-Even though FSU should be much improved, the schedule is tough starting with the opener vs Notre Dame. I think 6-6 would be significant progress.

Georgia Tech

-This is a big year for head coach Geoff Collins now in Year 3 transitioning away from the option.
-The game was played at "thud" which is tough to gauge. I know the offensive line would have given up a ton of sacks if not for it.
-QB Jeff Sims and RB Jahmyr Gibbs return after starting as true frosh. Gibbs looks like he has put on 10 pounds and Sims has to cut down the TO's.
-The Yellow Jackets bring in a ton of transfers. #2 Kyric McGowan from Northwestern flashed immediately. On defense, Maryland transfer LB Ayinde Eley flashed as well.
-Anytime you play Notre Dame and Georgia in non-conference action, the schedule is going to be tough. They also pull a road game at Clemson in cross-division play.
-I have GT at 5-7, which will put a ton of pressure on Collins in Year 4.

Louisville didn't have a televised spring game. With what went down with head coach Scott Satterfield pining for the South Carolina job, I'm a little concerned.

Miami, FL

-Canes have 4 new coaches on the defensive side of the ball and Manny Diaz is back calling plays.
-With D'Eriq King out due to an ACL injury he suffered in the bowl, all eyes were on the QB's. **Jake Garcia is the highest rated QB recruit for Miami since Kyle Wright in 2003. I have to say I was impressed. Miami has a bright future with him.** Tyler Van Dyke can be a capable backup.
-I liked what I saw from the RB's. #23 Cam'Ron Harris, #2 Donald Chaney and #4 Jaylan Knighton make for a deep and talented corps.
-Miami returns 165 career starts on the OL. That could be the most in CFB history!
-No surprise...flags everywhere. Miami remains an undisciplined team.
-Miami brings in some key transfers. Oklahoma WR Charleston Rambo looked good and Georgia CB Tyrique Stevenson will also have an instant impact.
-#15 Safety Avantae Williams flashed.
-The Canes have to replace a lot on the DL but #96 Jonathan Forde (6-5 315), #98 Jalar Holley and #99 Elijah Roberts all look the part.

-The Hurricanes are going to get smoked in the opener vs Alabama but after that, the only other game I have them an underdog in is at North Carolina. Miami is always good to lose at least one game they have no business losing, so I have them at 9-3. I think that's a solid season.

NC State

-A lot of guys were out including WR Emeka Emeze, RB's Zonovan Knight and Ricky Person and LB Payton Wilson to name a few.

-Keep an eye on #79 Ikem Ekwonu at OT. Looks like a future high NFL Draft pick.

-#5 Thayer Thomas is a solid slot guy. #3 RB Jordan Houston ran very hard.

-QB Devin Leary is back healthy. He was having a solid season (8-2 ratio) until he was KO'd last year.

-#10 Safety Tanner Ingle packs a punch for 5-10 182. LB #1 Isaiah Moore at 6-2 240 looks like he belongs in the SEC.

-Overall, I was impressed with the talent level even with several starters out.

-The schedule isn't easy as they pull the top 2 teams from the Coastal in Miami, FL and North Carolina and have a tough trip to Mississippi St in non-conference action. At BC and at FSU doesn't help in division play. I'm thinking 6-6 or 7-5, which I'm guessing won't make the fans too happy.

North Carolina

-Last year was the first major bowl for NC since 1950!

-Game was played in rain.

-I think QB Sam Howell is the best returning QB in CFB and despite playing only a few series, he made 2 throws down the field that I just didn't see anyone else do this spring.

-Tar Heels lost 5 key guys to the draft but got a jump-start to 2021 when most sat out the bowl game and they out-played A&M the first 3.5 quarters.

-They have plenty of capable replacements. The WR's to know are #11 Josh Downs, #3 Antoine Green and #0 Emery Simmons.

-They bring in Tennessee transfer RB #19 Ty Chandler. He will start but don't overlook #23 Josh Henderson, who ran hard.

-On defense LB #7 Eugene Asante looks the part.

-A lot of freshman stood out. The Tar Heels are already preparing for life without Howell as they bring in a high 4-star in Drake Maye.

-I noted who the heck is #6 on the defensive line? He's built unlike anyone the Heels have. He's Keeshawn Silver. 6-5 289 and was a 5-star recruit. In fact, he is the 5th highest rated recruit in NC history! He will play right away.

-#11 LB Dillworth, #23 LB Power Echols are both 4-stars frosh that flashed and have NC in good shape at that position in the future.

-Overall, you can tell head coach Mack Brown has really upgraded the talent level in such a short period. The Heels are in position to be the 2nd best program in the ACC behind Clemson, unless FSU and Miami start recruiting lights out.

-I have North Carolina favored in every game but one...a trip to Notre Dame where NC has the situational edge off a bye while ND is off USC. I will be very surprised if the Heels don't win 10 games this year.

Pittsburgh

-QB Kenny Pickett is back for what seems like his 12th season. He has a chance to be at the top of many Pitt career records by the end of the year. He only played one series.

-The backup QB's were live and Nick Patti, Joey Yellen and Davis Beville all got a ton of work. Whoever emerges, the Panthers will have a capable backup.

-I like the Pitt WR room. #10 Jaylon Barden looks like a guy that can take the next step. You also have #11 Taysir Mack, #3 Jordan Addison, #5 Jared Wayne and Shocky Jacques-Louis.

-Two players really stood out to me and I honestly didn't have an idea who they were prior. The first is RB #2 **Israel Abanikanda. Pitt had a draft for the spring game and he was the first player taken. Fantasy players note that Abanikanda could go from unknown to one of the top RB's in the ACC. He looked that good. Probably was the biggest surprise of any individual player I saw on any team this spring.**

-The second was TE/H-Back #7 Lucas Krull. He's 6-6 260, runs a 4.6 40. Looks like high-round NFL Draft pick if they can utilize him accordingly (big if).

-When you look at the talent that Pitt had last year (6 players drafted!), there's just no excuse why they went 6-5. Head coach Pat Narduzzi is a really good coordinator. He's just not a good head coach.

-Center Jimmy Morrissey is a really big loss. He was a team leader and could play multiple positions on the OL.

-If Pitt can win at Tennessee in Week 2, they'll be 4-0 heading to Georgia Tech. Overall, I have them at 7-5 which is basically where this program has been the last decade.

Syracuse, Virginia, Virginia Tech and Wake Forest all didn't have televised spring games.

Pac-12:

Arizona

-One of the biggest surprises this spring was Arizona. The Jedd Fisch hire was originally panned by many but Fisch has done a great job so far. He hired a staff with Arizona ties (3 of Arizona's 4 CFB Hall of Famers are on staff). He brought back over 200 alumni including Rob Gronkowski and Tedy Bruschi, opened practices to fans and convinced several current players not to transfer.

-By watching the game you would have no idea that Arizona is on a school-record 12-game losing streak. There was a ton of energy in the stands, on the sidelines and on the field.

-Now the tough part...the Wildcats are way behind the rest of the south division in the Pac-12 talent wise.

-Will Plummer looks like the favorite to be the QB. Backup is Gunner Cruz who is 6-5 224 and has a big arm. USF transfer Jordan McCloud arrives in the fall.

-I liked what I saw from the WR group including #5 Brian Casteel, #86 Stanley Berryhill and #10 Jamarye Joiner.

-The RB's ran hard led by #6 Michael Wiley, #20 Darrius "Bam" Smith and #28 Nazar Bombata.

-Their kicker Lucas Havrisik drilled 47 and 48-yarders. He looked good.

- Don Brown (from Michigan) is the new DC and I question whether his scheme still works. His defenses trended in the wrong direction the last couple of years.
- Brown is looking for some “Desert Dudes” those who make plays, make big hits and TO’s and dominates position groups.
- The goal this season is to break the losing streak early, win a couple of games (I’d put their season win total at 2.5 with the UNDER juiced) and don’t get embarrassed 70-7 like they did vs rival Arizona State last season. If they accomplish that, then I’d consider year 1 to be successful for Fisch.

Arizona State

- This was one of the first spring games I watched back in late March.
- The game was “thud” so you don’t get a great look at the team.
- Herm Edwards has exceeded expectations so far but this is the year ASU needs to take the next step and compete for a division title and a conference championship.
- They are well-positioned to do so thanks to the return of 14 Super Seniors!
- I think QB Jayden Daniels could be a Top 10 QB in the country.
- The RB corps is loaded with #1 Chip Trayanum, #3 Rachaad White and #4 Daniyel Ngata. That’s as good as it gets for a program like ASU.
- Oklahoma transfer TE #12 Jalin Conyers made some plays.
- On defense, LSU transfer DE #49 Travez Moore is 6-4 250. He doesn’t look like most Pac-12 players. He will have an instant impact.
- Of the true freshman, 4-star Tommi Hill at DB looks like he can crack the 2-deep.
- The WR group is young. Keep an eye on #6 LV Bunkley-Shelton, a former 4-star.
- There is no game on the schedule that is un-winnable but road trips to Utah and Washington will be tough. I have the Sun Devils at 9-3.

Cal

- The Bears were the first spring game I watched almost 2 months ago already.
- The Bears had over 100 players this spring.
- It was the most competitive spring so far in Justin Wilcox’s tenure. A 3-deep on the offensive line (return all 5 starters) allowed them to scrimmage a ton.
- Cal has a new strength coach in Brian Johnson and in two months the roster added 595 pounds of good muscle. Last year Cal couldn’t go in their locker room. They had to lift weights on their football field!
- Deep position groups, the most noticeable to me was the WR’s. #10 Jeremiah Hunter looks like he could be a breakout player. Keep an eye on #4 Nikko Remigio.
- On defense, #91 NG Ricky Correia at 6-4 350 really stood out to me. You don’t see many players his size in the Pac-12.
- Chase Garbers is back at QB. The Bears are 14-5 when plays at least ½ the game.
- #34 Christopher Brown at 6-1 235 ran hard at RB.
- Of the true freshman, the most impressive to me was 4-star TE #87 Jermaine Terry at 6-4 275.
- Keep an eye on FSU transfer DB Raymond Woodie but the defensive leaders are clearly #3 S Elijah Hicks and #8 OLB Kuony Deng at 6-6 245.

-Cal hasn't made the Rose Bowl since 1959. I would like to see them play in it in my lifetime. It won't be this year as the schedule is too tough. I have Cal right around 6-6 in what should be a very competitive Pac-12.

Colorado

-Head coach Karl Dorrell really exceeded my expectations last year. He was put in a tough spot hired late in the process in a COVID year and yet Colorado started 4-0.

-Last year's starting QB Sam Noyer was out for this spring. **If you want a hot take, I don't think Noyer will be the starter this year.** He was benched in the Alamo Bowl for Brendon Lewis who played well and the Buffs bring in Tennessee transfer JT Shrout. Shrout has a better arm than Noyer and Lewis is a better athlete.

-#23 RB Jarek Broussard was last year's 2020 Pac-12 player of the year despite running in a knee brace. They also bring back 2019 top rusher Alex Fontenot. 4-star RB #0 Ashaad Clayton is the most talented and #28 Joe Davis ran hard. It's a deep RB group right up there with Oregon and Arizona State as the best in the conference.

-The WR's really impressed me. #5 La'Vontae Shenault, #14 Dimitri Stanley, #6 Daniel Arias all flashed. #88 Keith Miller who is 6-5 210 really showed multiple times and keep an eye on TE #18 Caleb Fauria.

-On defense the Buffs OLB Carson Wells is one of the best in the Pac-12. LB Nate Landman is also solid but he was out for the spring game along with a dozen others who had post-season surgery.

-They like the talent of Oklahoma transfer Robert Barnes in the secondary.

-While I really like what I saw personnel wise from Colorado, this year's schedule is a nightmare. It's easily one of the toughest in the country. Colorado plays Texas A&M and Minnesota in non-conference action. They pull the two best teams (Oregon and Washington) from the North. I only see 4-8/5-7.

Oregon

-The Ducks have recruited better than anyone in the Pac-12 the last couple of years.

-Anthony Brown looks like your clear starter at QB. I figured that's the direction they were moving towards when they used Brown at the goal line in the USC game and benched Tyler Shough in the Fiesta Bowl. Shough since transferred to Texas Tech.

-Brown is okay. You can win a lot of games with him. Can you win at Ohio State in Week 2 and can you get to the CFB playoff with him? I don't think so.

-Incoming frosh QB Ty Thompson is the highest rated QB recruit in Oregon history! But he is just competing for the backup job for now with 4-star RS Frosh Jay Butterfield.

-The Ducks return both CJ Verdell and Travis Dye at RB for what seems like the 7th season. They both run hard for their small size.

-They are also experienced at WR with all their top guys back. Jaylon Redd and Johnny Johnson are back again and it's time for #4 Mycah Pittman to play up to his lofty expectations. However, it was #14 Kris Hutson who impressed me more and 4-star true frosh #11 Troy Franklin also looked the part.

-The Ducks return all 5 starters on the offensive line.

-The defense will be led by a talented LB corps with former 5-stars Justin Flowe and Noah Sewell.

-The Ducks have a new DC in Tim DeRuyter who they took from Cal. It's a really good move and **the Ducks are more committed to winning than any other program out West.**

-The kicker Henry Katleman drilled a 52-yarder. That was impressive.

-Outside of the Ohio State game where the Ducks will be more than a TD underdog in, there's no game on their schedule that is un-winnable. However, trips to Washington and Utah will not be easy and Cristobal doesn't wow me "X's and O's" wise. I think the Ducks drop a couple of games.

Oregon State

-The first hour of the broadcast was more like an infomercial so I didn't get a great read on the players. I do like what the stadium will look like in a couple years.

-I like head coach Jonathan Smith and think he's doing a good job here. The offense has gotten noticeably better under his direction.

-Tristan Gebbia, the likely QB starter was out for spring.

-I liked what I saw from the true frosh Sam Vidlak. He will be the future starter at the position.

-Oregon State like most Pac-12 teams returns a ton of Super Seniors.

-A couple of guys that physically stood out to me: #2 OLB Andrzej Hughes-Murray at 6-2 244 looked unlike any other player on the team. Also #1 CB Rejohn Wright looked the part at 6-2 182.

-The Beavers do bring in a few transfers led by South Carolina RB #5 Deshaun Fenwick (6-2 226) and Kansas DB #8 Elijah Jones. They expect them to make an instant impact.

-The Purdue game in Week 1 will tell us a lot about the Beavers.

-I have them around 4-8/5-7. They need to get over the hump in close games to get to bowl eligibility.

Stanford and UCLA play their spring games next week and I will add notes.

USC

-The Trojans made an effort to boost their support staff (both on and off-the-field). Recruiting has definitely gone better than it did for the 2019 and 2020 classes but still this team didn't look like it had a Top 10 roster when watching the games this spring. That's unacceptable.

-QB Kedon Slovis is a good solid QB. But he doesn't look improved from 2020 or even his freshman 2019 season. You can win a lot of games with Slovis at QB, I'm not sure you can win the Pac-12 or a major bowl game with him.

-All eyes were on the frosh QB's. I kind of like Jaxson Dart over Miller Moss right now.

-Texas transfer RB Keontay Ingram had the best run of the scrimmage. I'm guessing he will either start or backup Malepeai, which is why Stephen Carr just transferred.

-WR Drake London is their best player on offense. 5-star #4 WR Bru McCoy also made some plays and the Trojans have Gary Bryant and Colorado transfer KD Nixon. The WR corps is in really good shape.

-Meanwhile, the offensive line just isn't there. It's the weakest unit on the offense. Some of it is talent, some of it is scheme. Trojans really struggled in short-yardage last year.

-Which brings me to this... **The Air Raid offense is not USC football!**

-Edge player Drake Jackson is their best player on defense. He and the nation's No. 1 overall recruit Korey Foreman will make life for QB's very tough. Foreman doesn't arrive until the fall.

-There is no game on the schedule that is un-winnable. However, I don't like the Trojans chances at Notre Dame and at Arizona State and I think they drop another game. I have them at 9-3, which I'm guessing keeps Helton around for another year.

Utah

-A lot of teams on the West Coast play "patty-cake" football, Utah plays "pancake". The scrimmage was physical. All QB's were live except Brewer and those QB's took some big hits. You just don't see that too often anymore.

-The Utes bring in a ton of transfers led by Baylor QB Charlie Brewer. He went 15 of 15 in the game and handled himself like a pro. You would have thought he was in Utah's system for 3-4 years.

-The Utes also have #3 Ja'Quinden Jackson from Texas who was a 4-star out of high school and #8 Peter Costelli who was a 4-star. Cameron Rising sat out the spring due to injury. Brewer is going to be the starter and I expect him to perform very well.

-They also brought in a couple of transfers at RB. Oklahoma transfer TJ Pledger and LSU transfer Chris Curry give them options especially after the tragic death of Ty Jordan who led the team in rushing last year. Curry runs harder than most Pac-12 backs.

-WR unit brings back Brittain Covey who played well in the 2015 opener (Jim Harbaugh's debut for Michigan). That's not a typo...2015 and Covey still has eligibility remaining after this year due to a 2-year mission, injuries and COVID.

-Keep an eye on #17 Vele Devaughn (6-4 205) who made a couple of good catches. Also #21 Solomon Enis looks good.

-The Utes return all 5 starters on the offensive line.

- No game on the schedule is un-winnable. I have the Utes around 9-3 and did bet them 10/1 to win the Pac-12.

Washington

-Dylan Morris returns at QB, they bring in Colorado State transfer Patrick O'Brien and they signed 5-star Sam Huard. Huard has the most upside by far but I don't see him being the opening day starter. Morris and O'Brien are just okay.

-TE Cade Otton is their best player on offense. He's a Top 5 TE nationally, maybe Top 2. The problem is I don't see any big-time play-makers at WR. #16 Rome Odunze made some plays. He's a former 4-star.

-The RB's are solid. #5 Sean McGrew, #6 Richard Newton and #22 Cameron Davis all run hard.

-The offensive line returns all 5 starters led by Jaxson Kirkland at left tackle.

-The defense needs to find a pass rusher after Zion Tupuola-Fetui hurt his Achilles in the spring. He had 7 sacks in 4 games last year!

-The secondary continues to reload. Keep an eye on Oklahoma transfer Radley-Hiles. #25 Elijah Jackson made a great interception as he sat of the flat and jumped the route. #2 Kyler Gordon could also be one of the best in the Pac-12.

-#48 Edefuan Ulofoshio and #43 Jackson Sirmon are really solid players at LB.

-The Huskies are still an unknown to me with them only playing four games last year (all at home). I like what I've read on Jimmy Lake but he is un-proven and so is the QB position.

-The schedule is really favorable. They avoid USC and Utah from the South and host both Oregon and Arizona State. No game is un-winnable and we'll learn a ton from them in their week 2 visit to Michigan. If I were a Huskies fan, I'd be a little disappointed if they don't win 10 games this year.

Washington State

-The defense easily got the best of the offense on a very wet day.

-Head coach Nick Rolovich is a personality so it was no surprise that the Cougars started the game with the "Cowboy Snap Duel" between the long snappers.

-It went downhill from there as Tennessee QB Jarrett Guarantano threw an interception on the first play and injured his hand. He did not take another snap.

-Keep in mind, last year's starter Jayden De Laura was suspended with a DIU this spring.

-Cammon Cooper got a ton of snaps. He's a lefty that was highly regarded coming out of high school a few years back but has not lived up to his potential. True frosh Xavier Ward also got a bunch of reps and #10 Victor Gabalis played well.

-I really like the Washington St RB corps. Max Borghi didn't play but Deon McIntosh flashed a couple of times. They need to get both guys on the field at the same time.

-The WR's are solid led by Renard Bell and Travell Harris. #88 De'Zhaun Stribling from Hawaii is a freshman to keep an eye on. He's exceeded expectations so far.

-The Cougars return almost everyone on defense. #13 LB Jahad Woods will be the leader.

-The Pac-12 schedule is very tough as the Cougars pull the top 3 teams from the South in USC, Arizona State and Utah. Bowl eligibility has to be the goal even with a soft non-conference slate.

Notre Dame

-All eyes were on the QB's. All had their moments good and bad. **I expect Jack Coan to be the starter.** He stood tall in the pocket and has a stronger arm than Ian Book. He also appears to be more mobile than I anticipated. Drew Pyne is a career back-up, which doesn't make him bad...he just shouldn't be starting at ND. True frosh Tyler Buchner has the most upside but playing only one season of football the last 3 years (one year hurt, one year COVID) has stunted his growth. He needs a year and will be the starter in 2022.

-The other big story for ND is the hire of Marcus Freeman at DC. The fact that ND out-bid a SEC school (LSU) for Freeman is a signal that ND might be ready to finally compete with the major players of the sport. Freeman already handles himself like a head coach on the sidelines and probably won't be at ND too long. He's made major waves on the recruiting front already and schematically the Irish didn't miss a beat from what I saw in the spring game. They played fast and physical.

-**Notre Dame was the first team since Michigan in 2001 to have 3 offensive linemen drafted in the Top 100 of the NFL Draft. They lost 142 career starts.** Safe to say it's a major question mark. The OL was dominated by the ND defensive front 7.

-With that being said, their top OL Jarrett Patterson was out for the spring due to injury.

-True frosh OL Blake Fisher is the biggest freshman offensive lineman I've ever seen at ND in the 30 years I've followed them. He will start immediately and I expect him to be a first-round pick in the NFL Draft 3 years from now.

-Rocco Spindler is another true frosh OL to keep an eye on. He could start at OG for the Irish right away. Both Spindler and Fisher were Top 60 overall recruits nationally.

-The RB's are set with the return of Kyren Williams. Backup RB Chris Tyree is one of the best players on the team so Irish OC Tommy Rees needs to find a way to have both on the field at the same time. I think Tyree has more upside than Williams.

-TE Michael Mayer sat out. He's a Top 5 TE nationally and the Irish as always have options there including George Takacs.

-The WR unit is the weakest unit on the team. Lawrence Keys made some plays but the talent level and depth is not even Top 25 caliber let alone CFB playoff material. They get Kevin Austin back from injury in the fall but he can't stay healthy.

-The defensive front 7 is Top 10 good. They don't have a talent like Owusu-Koramoah at LB but they're deep at the position. Jack Kiser is kind of a "poor-man's" Pete Werner who just got drafted from Ohio State. #35 Marist Liufau is a name to keep an eye on.

-On the DL, #17 Jordan Bothello is another name to keep an eye on. Despite losing several DE draft picks the last couple of years, the Irish continue to reload there. It's becoming as consistently good as their OL/TE groups as far as churning out talent.

-Their best player on the team #14 Safety Kyle Hamilton did not play. The secondary was a question mark but looked fine. #5 Cam Hart and #11 Ramon Henderson are names to know at CB. The concern is that the WR unit is so mediocre, that it inflates how good the secondary looked.

- ND only returns 9 starters...that's among the fewest of any team in the country. **They just had 9 players drafted, the most for them since 1994!** They haven't recruited like Alabama or Ohio State so I don't anticipate an automatic reload.

-If this were the 2018-2020 ND teams as far as talent level and experience, I'd argue for a legit shot to go 12-0. With that said, there are no un-winnable games on the schedule. The toughest games (Wisconsin, Cincinnati, USC and North Carolina) are all at home or in Wisconsin's case, nearby Chicago.

-**Notre Dame has won 31 consecutive games as a favorite** (an incredible feat) but that comes to an end this year. I could see 3 losses.