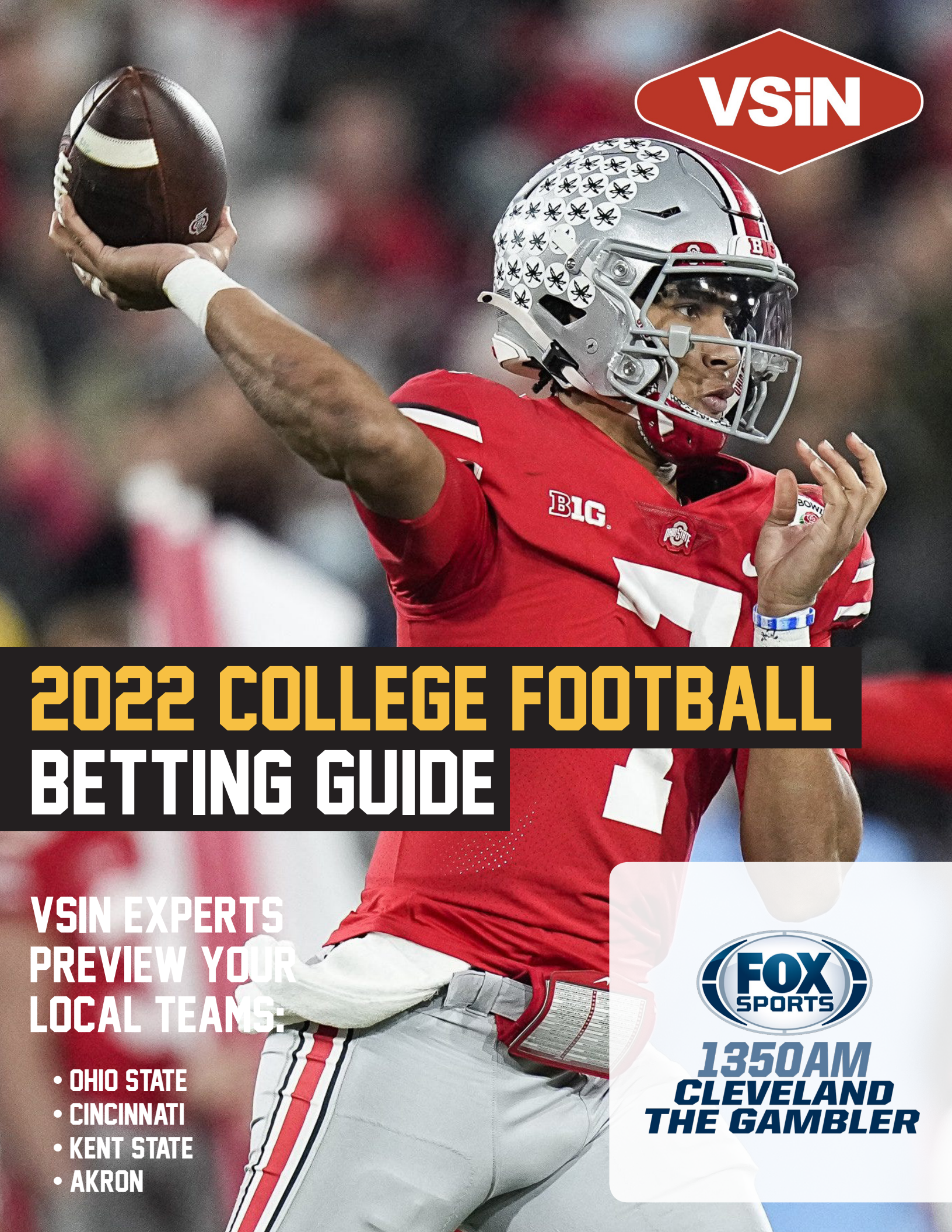




VSIN

2022 COLLEGE FOOTBALL BETTING GUIDE

**VSIN EXPERTS
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CLEVELAND
THE GAMBLER**



Big Storylines, Names to Know and Top 10 Games

By Adam Kramer

Years from now, when there are only two conferences and high school juniors are signing \$10 million dollar deals, college football will look very different.

The sport you know and love is changing quickly. The evolution came without much warning, through the transfer portal and NIL. Before that, the College Football Playoff and a huge infusion of television money sent us on this path.

Regardless of the conference size or the sponsorship amounts, however, Saturdays are still sacred. Waking up to a full Saturday slate is still one of the greatest moments of the year.

You will still chase on Hawaii. You will still embrace kickers being wildly inaccurate, home underdogs thriving off the environment and the imperfections that make college football great.

Yes, the sport is changing. And some of the changes, if we're being honest, we could do without.

But make no mistake about where this is all heading: to the couch, to the parking lot soaked in warm domestic beer, to the sportsbook or your favorite betting app. It's heading back to the places you always consume college football, because these are the proper ways to consume it.

Change all you want, college football – we'll come along for the ride.

The Five Biggest Storylines Entering the Season

1.

Welcome back, elite quarterbacks

This is not a knock on the 2021 crop of QBs; that narrative has been exhausted. With only one quarterback selected in the top 73 picks, however, it's clear that NFL teams were unimpressed by last year's class. That is not the case heading into 2022.

Ohio State's C.J. Stroud (+250 to win the Heisman Trophy) and Alabama's Bryce Young (+350) are poised to be the face of the sport and, fittingly, are the favorites to win the Heisman.

But there is also a ton of depth at the position. Caleb Williams (+800), just a true sophomore, should erupt at USC. (More on the Trojans in a moment.)

Dillion Gabriel (30-1) might be the most underappreciated addition of the offseason for Oklahoma. Tyler Van Dyke (35-1) looked fabulous at the end of last year, and he could be in for a massive year for Miami.

The list is deep. Quinn Ewers (35-1), Anthony Richardson (40-1) and many others are legitimate breakout candidates. The position is loaded, and more are likely to join the party.

2.

Can the champs deliver an encore?

The Georgia defense was the definition of elite last fall. The offense, while secondary to the other side of the ball, was loaded with talent. After watching 15 players from its national championship team find a home in the NFL draft, however, it's reasonable to question what happens next.

The Bulldogs are still +380 to win the title, behind only Alabama and Ohio State. The defense is still ripe with talent, headlined by edge rusher Nolan Smith.

I'm more curious to see what happens at quarterback. Stetson Bennett likely has the upper hand after winning the national championship in somewhat emphatic fashion, although it's not a given. Brock Vandagriff, a former five-star recruit, could push him (as could true freshman Gunner Stockton).

The talent is there, but so are the questions. Oh, and Alabama is loaded. (Shocking.)

3.

Is 2022 as top-heavy as it seems?

Despite the violent conference movement, transfer portal and coaching carousel, the number of true national championship contenders feels much smaller than it has in some time.

Yes, CFB is entering a volatile phase.

No, that isn't altering expectations in 2022.

There is Alabama (+180), Ohio State (+320), Georgia (+380) and Clemson (+1000).

After that, the field – and odds – opens wide up.

If you like a team like Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Michigan or Texas, you will be able to get them at 40-1 or higher. For playoff contenders – which they all are if things go well – this feels like a decent bargain.

But as we saw with Cincinnati during the College Football Playoff last season, making the final four isn't enough. You must make the playoff, which is difficult, and then you must slay whatever dragon stands in your way.

Given the talent levels of the favorites mentioned above, it won't be easy. As we've seen before, however, college football tends to do weird, college football-y things.

There's plenty of value to be had if you can pick the right teams squarely in the middle of the pack.

4.

Behold the glorious transfer portal

Recruiting and the NFL draft are no longer the only avenues you need to be aware of during the dormant months. These days, the transfer portal might be the most potent resource of them all.

In terms of meaningful additions this offseason, a few teams stand out.

Alabama loaded up on both offense and defense, adding true difference-makers to a team already overflowing with talent.

USC, Miami and LSU all added meaningful players, as did Texas and Oklahoma. Even Nebraska, which found a way to lose every close game it played last year, did an overhaul in the portal by acquiring more than a dozen players.

This isn't just a theme for 2022; it's a theme from this point forward. Become one with the portal.

5.

Lincoln Riley's maiden California voyage

The move to the Big Ten will steal some shine, but Riley's Pac-12 stay, no matter how short it might be, is one of the most intriguing components of the 2022 season.

Although they have won 10 games just twice in the past eight years, the Trojans are 30-1 to win the national title, behind only five other teams.

Those odds, frankly, feel excessive.

That said, they play in the right conference, have the right quarterback, are loaded at skill positions and should be a treat to watch on offense. The defense is another story, hence the mild pessimism.

Will we be able to have reasonable discord about USC this season?

Given the hype and expectations, it seems unlikely. Although given the massive uptick in recruitment poised for this year and beyond, this conversation will likely continue.

The 10 Games You Need to See This Year

Every college football game should be consumed. That is an important disclaimer.

Ranking the best games of the year is always difficult, largely because meaningful football games don't fully take shape until the middle of the year. With that out of the way, here my initial rankings of the top 10 games of 2022.

It's worth noting that meaningful out-of-conference games, especially those played on a college campus, are always given more weight in this exercise.

1. Alabama (-16.5) vs. Texas A&M (Oct. 8)

Jimbo Fisher vs. Nick Saban. Before realignment grabbed the steering wheel, this was the primary plot line. Throw in A&M's win over Alabama last year that the Aggies parlayed into a historic recruiting class, along with the offseason war of words and we have ourselves a delightful scenario. Tuscaloosa will be electric.

2. Alabama (-14.5) at Texas (Sept. 10)

Yes, we're going double 'Bama off the top. A rematch of the 2010 BCS National Championship Game will headline Week 2. Oh, and the football game will be played in Austin at 11 a.m. local time, where it will likely be 105 degrees.

3. Ohio State (-14.5) vs. Notre Dame (Sept. 3)

Speaking of unbelievable football environments, enter Columbus, Ohio. The Buckeyes' loaded offense will welcome Notre Dame to town to begin the season, and the spread is north of two touchdowns. Marcus Freeman's first regular season game as Notre Dame's coach is a tall task.

4. Ohio State (-13.5) vs. Michigan (Nov. 26)

The first rivalry staple is always must-see TV. After Michigan finally conquered the Buckeyes, however, Ohio State is likely thinking of revenge. Homefield will certainly be huge for Ohio State, as it normally is in this series. I cannot get enough of this football game.

5. Georgia (-17) vs. Oregon (Sept. 3)

The spread, like many meaningful Week 1 lines, is robust. Still, watching Oregon and Georgia tussle is certainly something we welcome. Beyond seeing a remade Georgia roster, former Bulldogs DC Dan Lanning draws his old team in his very first game. I'm in.

6. Arkansas (-6.5) vs. Cincinnati (Sept. 3)

From playoff participant to near-touchdown underdog, Cincinnati's season should be fascinating. It begins on the road against a quality opponent with a quality coach powered by a really intriguing QB. I have had this game circled since December.

7. Utah (-3.5) vs. USC (Oct. 15)

For now, these two teams will power the Pac-12. Until that changes, and it will, this is likely to be one of the more intriguing games played all season. Utah has a massive home field advantage, and USC will likely need to conquer the Utes if it plans to match the preseason hype.

8. Utah (-2) at Florida (Sept. 3)

Speaking of Utah, here is another big one for them. It seems strange seeming Florida as an underdog at home, although it feels, well, right. Bill Napier was a quality hire, although the roster certainly needs some more. Florida QB Anthony Richardson is a fascinating talent, and he is poised to have a say on this outcome.

9. Oklahoma (-3) vs. Texas (Oct. 8)

A new coach, two new QBs and two rivals planning exits to the SEC. Yes, the Red River Rivalry delivers. Last year, Texas produced an epic meltdown that led to a season-long meltdown. This year, Brent Venables will get his first taste of this home-grown hate as head coach.

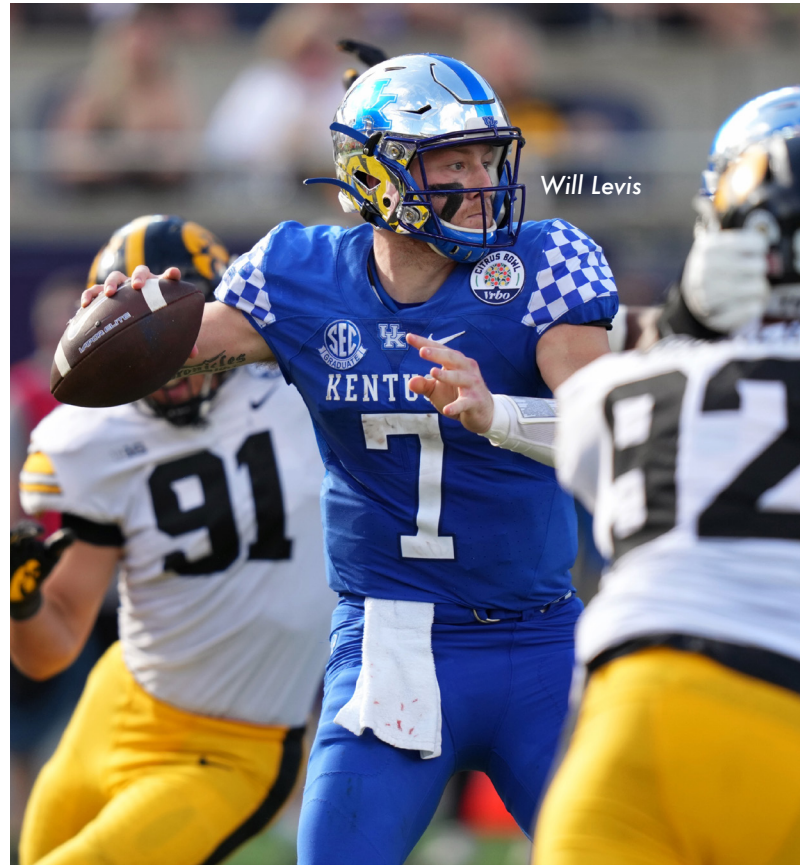
10. Texas A&M (-7.5) vs. Miami (Sept. 17)

Call it the NIL Bowl, because both of these teams have it rolling on the recruiting front thanks to massive booster buy-in. Texas A&M feels like it has the more talented roster, although Miami is poised to surge after closing out last year strong.

Five (non-superstar) Names to Know in 2022

1. Will Levis (Kentucky, QB)

We do this every year. We take a quarterback with an NFL build, place him in and around the top 10 of every way-too-early NFL mock draft and then let the madness unfold. Levis has become a hugely popular name in NFL circles, and he has the build and gifts to warrant some of the buzz. But can he live up to it? If you're a believer, you can get him at 50-1 to win the Heisman.



Will Levis

2. Cade Klubnik (Clemson, QB)

If you follow recruiting, you know this name well. Clemson's five-star true freshman QB enrolled early, and he is likely to be a fascinating piece to the Tigers' puzzle. The moment D.J. Uiagalelei struggles at all next fall, the chants for Klubnik will begin. Although he hasn't played a down yet, he's still 60-1 to win the Heisman. Stay tuned.

3. Devon Achane (Texas A&M, RB)

When the ball is in his hands, there might not be a more exciting player in all of college football – there also might not be a faster player. Achane averaged seven yards per carry and scored nine touchdowns in a reserve role last year. With Isaiah Spiller gone, however, Achane is likely to get a much bigger workload for a team looking for a breakthrough. That is good news for all of us.

4. Isaiah Neyor (Texas, WR)

Amid the transfer madness, Texas landed a huge commitment in Neyor. The 6-foot-3 wideout left Wyoming for Austin. Last year, he caught 44 passes, 12 touchdowns and averaged nearly 20 yards per catch. Playing alongside Xavier Worthy in an offense poised to put up points, Neyor could be in line for a monster season.

5. Jim Knowles (Ohio State, DC)

Of the coordinator hires made this past offseason, none felt more impactful than the addition of Knowles at Ohio State. The former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator was one of the primary reasons behind the Pokes' playoff push in 2021. He will now be expected to have a similar, immediate impact in Columbus. The offense is loaded. If the defense is anything close to "good," Ohio State will be an incredibly tough team to beat.

How to Make Your Own Power Ratings: A Primer

By Adam Burke

The idea of setting your own game lines probably seems daunting. Oddsmakers have mountains of information and public betting data to work with. However, you can put together something raw and fairly basic that at least gives you a good idea of where a line should be.

Power ratings are an inexact science. They are designed to be a guide to give you a frame of reference. They are subjective in nature, which means nobody's power ratings are 100% accurate. But the ability to look at a game and compare your spread to the spread in the market can be a tremendously valuable resource.

I know people who have all kinds of spreadsheets and numerous sets of power ratings. I am not one of those people. But I can point you in the right direction to design an introductory set of power ratings you can use to try and get ahead of the market.

The function of a power rating is to be able to compare two teams and set a spread. Home-field advantage is included and I have a separate process for that. My process is neither complex nor time-consuming, and the nice thing is we can refer to the game lines that are out for Week 0, Week 1 and the Games of the Year to compare.

Setting It Up

Here's how to set up a set of positional power ratings:

Talent disparities are bigger in college football than in most sports. Analyzing roster turnover and transfers — from the portal and junior colleges — all go into the process.

Typically, my scale for power ratings ranges from 40 to 100, with teams such as Alabama and Ohio State near the century mark and teams such as UMass and New Mexico State at the bottom of the list.

To get to a max of 100, I use this scale:

QB: 15
RB: 10
WR: 10
OL: 15
DL: 15
LB: 10
DB: 10
Coaches/special teams: 15

The most important position on the field is the QB. The battle in the trenches is huge and makes up 30% of my power rating number. Coaching is also big and I include special teams as part of the job description since special teams are much harder to analyze.

Position by Position

Quarterbacks

A QB such as Bryce Young or CJ Stroud is going to get the highest rating possible at 15. Somebody just a step below that, such as Will Rogers at Mississippi State or Brennan Armstrong at Virginia, might get a 14 or 14.5. Quarterbacks for teams such as UMass, Akron or UConn are likely to be in the 5-6 range. You also have to grade these on a curve by conference, so if CJ Stroud is a 15 at Ohio State, Purdue's Aidan O'Connell would be a 13 or 13.5. Connor Bazelak at Indiana might be an 8 or a 9.

Running Backs

For a 10, think Bijan Robinson at Texas or the stable of backs at Georgia. If a team passes a lot, you may not want to grade the RBs that highly. On the other hand, a triple-option offense might get a 9 or 9.5 at the RB position while taking away points from WRs.

Wide Receivers

Wide receivers mean more at Western Kentucky than they do at UAB. There are also some WR corps that have future NFL players and plenty of size, while others are used more for blocking purposes or suffered big losses in the offseason. The best WR group in a conference might be a 9 or 10, so each group after that would go down a bit on the scale.

Offensive Line

Offensive lines on their own account for 15% of my power rating and that may not be enough. The ability to protect the quarterback impacts all of the above position groups and impacts the defense as well. I've toyed with extending this out to 20 and borrowing from another area, but the best offensive lines in the country are a 15 and the worst are in the 5-6 range.

Defensive Line

Defensive lines are important as well and I tend to include edge rushers in this group. Does a team stop the run? Does a team get after the quarterback? How do they generate tackles for loss? You also have to consider if there is a new defensive coordinator and if a team moves from a 3-4 to a 4-3. The job description of a defensive lineman changes based on the scheme and some teams may be better equipped for one over the other.

Linebackers

Linebackers mean so much in football nowadays with all of the RPOs and how often tight ends are used in the passing game. Most college linebackers end up being tackle machines because there are so many different offensive schemes. The best groups get a 10, while the worst get a 4.

Defensive Backs

Same story here, but defensive backs are often the ones that force the turnovers. With all of the position groups, it's not enough to look at

the starters. I also look at the backups, which is why a magazine such as Phil Steele's is really valuable for this exercise. Injuries are prevalent in college football and the difference between a four-year senior starter and a true freshman can be big. Once again, the best groups get a 10 and the worst get a 4 or 4.5.

Coaching/special Teams

This is loosely 5 points for special teams and 10 for coaching, but the coaching part means more than just the head coach. Coordinators are taken heavily into account, including new coordinators who are changing schemes. Recruiting is also a small part of the evaluation process, since some coaches can get a lot of talent but won't get as much out of it as others. This scale goes from 7 to 15 for me.

The SEC as an Example

To show you an example of one conference, here are my SEC Power Ratings:

Alabama: 98.5
Georgia: 95.5
Texas A&M: 86
Tennessee: 82.5
Arkansas: 81
Ole Miss: 81
Mississippi State: 80
Kentucky: 79.5
Florida: 79
Auburn: 78
LSU: 78
South Carolina: 74
Missouri: 69
Vanderbilt: 55

Based on my "raw power rating," Alabama would be -3 on a neutral field against Georgia. Texas A&M would be -5 against Arkansas. Ole Miss would be -12 against Missouri.

Then I factor in home-field advantage and come up with my own game line. If the market line is off a few points from my line, I'll take that spread early in the week and expect it to move toward my line.

The true skill comes in updating your power ratings as the season goes along, which I'll outline in a future piece.

If you want to try this exercise, try rating one conference and then compare your lines with the Game of the Year lines to do some trial and error. If your research has you higher or lower on a team, that's fine. There's nothing wrong with that. It's your opinion, but use the existing lines from sportsbooks as a guide to make sure you aren't too far off.

I'll be doing a weekly update on VSiN.com of my power ratings, weekly adjustments and game lines to further elaborate on this concept and process.

Steve Makinen's Power Ratings

TEAM	RATING	TEAM	RATING	TEAM	RATING	TEAM	RATING
ALABAMA	73	LOUISVILLE	51.5	STANFORD	41.5	SOUTHERN MISS	33
OHIO STATE	72.5	UCLA	51.5	ARMY	41	E MICHIGAN	32.5
GEORGIA	69.5	MISSISSIPPI STATE	51	MISSOURI	41	OLD DOMINION	32.5
CLEMSON	64	NORTH CAROLINA	51	W KENTUCKY	41	W MICHIGAN	32.5
MICHIGAN	61	MINNESOTA	50	WASHINGTON STATE	41	COLORADO STATE	32
NOTRE DAME	60	TCU	50	CALIFORNIA	40.5	JAMES MADISON	31.5
UTAH	59.5	UCF	50	ILLINOIS	40.5	LOUISIANA TECH	31.5
TEXAS A&M	58.5	HOUSTON	49.5	LA LAFAYETTE	40.5	NEVADA	31.5
OKLAHOMA	58	PURDUE	49.5	LIBERTY	40.5	S ALABAMA	31
PITTSBURGH	57.5	IOWA STATE	49	NORTHWESTERN	40.5	BUFFALO	30.5
MIAMI FL	57	KANSAS STATE	49	SAN DIEGO STATE	40.5	GA SOUTHERN	30.5
OREGON	57	ARIZONA STATE	48	COASTAL CAROLINA	40	VANDERBILT	30.5
NC STATE	56.5	WASHINGTON	47.5	RUTGERS	40	DUKE	30
PENN STATE	56.5	MARYLAND	47	GEORGIA TECH	39.5	CHARLOTTE	29.5
TEXAS	56.5	BOISE STATE	46.5	INDIANA	39.5	TEXAS STATE UNIV	29.5
MICHIGAN STATE	56	SMU	46	GEORGIA STATE	39	UNLV	29
WISCONSIN	56	SOUTH CAROLINA	46	ARIZONA	38.5	UTEP	29
ARKANSAS	55	VIRGINIA	46	TROY	38	ARKANSAS STATE	28.5
OLE MISS	55	TEXAS TECH	45.5	TX-SAN ANTONIO	38	KENT STATE	28.5
CINCINNATI	54.5	VIRGINIA TECH	45.5	COLORADO	37.5	HAWAII	28
LSU	54.5	APPALACHIAN STATE	45	MIAMI OHIO	37	OHIO U	26.5
OKLAHOMA STATE	54.5	FRESNO STATE	45	UTAH STATE	37	BALL STATE	26
TENNESSEE	54.5	OREGON STATE	45	C MICHIGAN	36.5	BOWLING GREEN	25.5
AUBURN	54	AIR FORCE	44	KANSAS	35.5	TEMPLE	25
KENTUCKY	54	BOSTON COLLEGE	44	N ILLINOIS	35.5	RICE	24.5
BYU	53.5	SYRACUSE	43.5	TULSA	35.5	AKRON	23
IOWA	53.5	WEST VIRGINIA	43.5	SOUTH FLORIDA	35	LA MONROE	23
NEBRASKA	53	MARSHALL	43	SAN JOSE STATE	34.5	NEW MEXICO	20
FLORIDA STATE	52.5	TOLEDO	43	MIDDLE TENN STATE	34	CONNECTICUT	19.5
USC	52.5	MEMPHIS	42.5	NAVY	34	MASSACHUSETTS	19.5
BAYLOR	52	TULANE	42.5	FLA ATLANTIC	33.5	FLA INTERNATIONAL	18.5
WAKE FOREST	52	UAB	42.5	NORTH TEXAS	33.5	NEW MEXICO STATE	17
FLORIDA	51.5	EAST CAROLINA	42	WYOMING	33.5		



OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

HEAD COACH: RYAN DAY (4TH)

OFF. COORDINATOR: KEVIN WILSON • DEF. COORDINATOR: JIM KNOWLES
COLUMBUS, OH • OHIO STADIUM

72.5 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#2 OF 131)

14 RETURNING STARTERS
OFFENSE: 6, QB • DEFENSE: 8

Such is life in Columbus when an 11-2 season, a top-5 final ranking and a Rose Bowl victory is considered a disappointment. The Buckeyes lost to "the school up north" for the first time in nine years and missed out on the CFP. The offense has been a juggernaut and will continue to be for Ryan Day, but Day realized his defense must be better and he brought in three new defensive coaches including DC Jim Knowles.

OFFENSE

C.J. Stroud is the latest Ohio State signal-caller to flourish in Day's system following Justin Fields and the late Dwayne Haskins Jr. In 2021, Stroud lit up opponents with both accuracy (71.9%) and big plays (4,435 yards, 44 TD) while throwing just six interceptions. Stroud is a preseason Heisman favorite. Ohio State lost two receivers to the first round of the NFL draft and might not lose a step. Jaxon Smith-Njigba returns after setting school records in receptions (95) and receiving yards (1,606) last season. He had nine touchdown receptions and capped the season with 15 catches for 347 yards and three touchdowns in a 48-45 Rose Bowl victory over Utah. Marvin Harrison Jr. as well as Julian Fleming and Emeka Egbuka were all five-star recruits, so the Buckeyes are more than fine at wide receiver. TreVeyon Henderson is a premier back and had a stellar season as a true freshman (183 rushes, 1,248 yards, 15 TD). The offensive line was a tad inconsistent and loses Nicholas Petit-Frere and Thayer Munford to the NFL.

DEFENSE

The Buckeyes ranked in the top five of the Big Ten in sacks and interceptions but were ninth in points allowed (22.8 per game). That's why Knowles comes in from Oklahoma State, where led one of the nation's top 10 defenses (18.1 points per game). The Buckeyes allowed more than 30 points five times last season. Up front, they are loaded with talent. Jack Sawyer didn't start one game in his freshman year but should break out in 2022. J.T. Tuimoloau is another potential sophomore pass-rushing specialist to accent incumbent starters Zach Harrison and Javontae Jean-Baptiste. The Buckeyes need improvement in the middle, and junior LB Tommy Eichenberg, who had 17 tackles in the Rose Bowl, could be the man to provide it. In the secondary, veteran starting corners Denzel Burke (36 tackles, 12 PBU) and Cameron Brown (24 tackles, 7 PBU) return. Safety Ronnie Hickman (100 tackles) was the leading tackler in 2021. Josh Proctor is also back from a leg fracture that ended his 2021 campaign. Transfer safety Tanner McCalister started 16 games for Knowles at Oklahoma State.

OUTLOOK

While celebrating the 100-year anniversary of Ohio Stadium, Ohio State will embark on an eight-game home schedule that begins with a visit from Notre Dame and ends with Michigan in the season finale. The Buckeyes stumbled early at home last year against Oregon, so expect them to be focused against Notre Dame. The offense might be unstoppable and good enough to carry the team to the CFP, but the defense must hold up its end as well. Ohio State should be double-digit favorites in every game. Michigan State and Penn State are never easy on the road, but the Buckeyes are too talented not to roll through this conference. The win total is 10.5 with heavy juice to the Over, so laying this much on a win total isn't recommended, but do you see two losses on this schedule? – Matt Youmans

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT (Est. Line)	OppPR
9/3	NOTRE DAME (-16)	60
9/10	ARKANSAS ST (-48.5)	28.5
9/17	TOLEDO (-34)	43
9/24	WISCONSIN (-20.5)	56
10/1	RUTGERS (-36.5)	40
10/8	at Michigan St (-15.5)	56
10/22	IOWA (-22)	53.5
10/29	at Penn St (-14)	56.5
11/5	at Northwestern (-30)	40.5
11/12	INDIANA (-37)	39.5
11/19	at Maryland (-23.5)	47
11/26	MICHIGAN (-15.5)	61

SCHEDULE
STRENGTH

46.42
(#28 of 131)

FIELD
RATINGS

3.9 / 0.8
(HOME/ROAD)

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

OVER 10.5

BIG TEN CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

-210

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF
ODDS TO WIN

+300

TEAM TRENDS

- OHIO STATE IS 25-10 ATS (SINCE 2000) WHEN AVENGING A LOSS
- OHIO STATE IS 2-13 ATS (L15G) AS AP #2
- OHIO STATE IS 16-4-1 OVER (L5Y) ON ROAD

2021 RESULTS RECORD: 11-2

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	CL	ATS	TOTAL
9/2	at Minnesota	45-31	W	-14	T	62 0
9/11	OREGON	28-35	L	-14.5	L	64.5 U
9/18	TULSA	41-20	W	-24.5	L	60.5 0
9/25	AKRON	59-7	W	-48.5	W	66.5 U
10/2	at Rutgers	52-13	W	-15	W	58 0
10/9	MARYLAND	66-17	W	-21.5	W	71.5 0
10/23	at Indiana	54-7	W	-21.5	W	59 0
10/30	PENN ST	33-24	W	-18.5	L	61 U
11/6	at Nebraska	26-17	W	-14	L	68.5 U
11/13	PURDUE	59-31	W	-19	W	65.5 0
11/20	MICHIGAN ST	56-7	W	-19.5	W	70.5 U
11/27	at Michigan	27-42	L	-6.5	L	64 0
1/1	vs. Utah	48-45	W	-4	L	64.5 0

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT	RANK	STAT	RANK
Points Per Game	45.7	1	22.8	31
Yards Per Point	12.3	14	16.4	23
Plays Per Game	71.7	50		
Time of Possession	29:22	82		
3rd Down Conv. %	52.6%	3	42.2%	92
Total Yards Per Game	561.5	1	374	51
Yards Per Play	7.8	1	5.1	35
Rush Attempts Per Game	32.4	109		
Rush Yards Per Game	180.5	44	127.8	24
Yards Per Rush Attempt	5.6	3	3.7	27
Pass Attempts Per Game	38	15		
Completion %	70.7%	3	61.6%	74
Passing Yards Per Game	380.9	3	246.2	87
Yards Per Pass Attempt	10	4	6.9	34
Turnovers	0.8	14	1.5	39

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		70	40.5	4.43	-40.6	7	55.3	9.01	11.54	5	15.1	4.58	21.26
2020		71	42.9	2.63	-30.3	6-QB	49.8	7.74	11.29	4	20.8	5.11	16.15
2019	Yes	80.5	56.5	5.13	-50.1	4	61.1	8.47	10.49	9, DC	5.3	3.34	39.66
2018		64	32.8	2.65	-22.1	7	52.6	7.8	12.1	5	19.8	5.15	17.74



CINCINNATI BEARCATS

HEAD COACH: LUKE FICKELL (6TH)

OFF. COORDINATOR: GINO GUIDUGLI • DEF. COORDINATOR: MIKE TRESSEL

CINCINNATI, OH • NIPPERT STADIUM

54.5 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#20 OF 131)

13 RETURNING STARTERS
OFFENSE: 8 • DEFENSE: 5

Last year, Cincinnati became the first Group of 5 school to make the College Football Playoff before losing to Alabama, 27-6, in the semifinal. National Coach of the Year Luke Fickell's club is still the favorite in its last season in the conference before departing with Houston and UCF for the Big 12, but the Bearcats must replace nine NFL draft picks.

OFFENSE

Having made the playoff last season, you would think that Cincinnati's offense was a juggernaut, but it was not (58th in the nation in total offense). Nevertheless, the unit must replace a four-year starter and two-time AAC Offensive Player of the Year in quarterback Desmond Ridder, plus its leading rusher Jerome Ford and leading receiver Alec Pierce (all of whom went to the NFL).

While the skill position corps is brand new, there is some continuity on offense with the entire offensive line returning for first-year offensive coordinator and former Bearcats QB Gino Guidugli (2001-2004). Guidugli still holds most of the program's passing and total offense records and was promoted this year from QB coach to replace Mike Denbrock, now at LSU in the same role.

Ben Bryant was the backup QB here in 2019 and 2020 before transferring to Eastern Michigan last year where he started 11 games and threw for 3,121 yards and 14 TDs. Bryant is now back at Cincinnati competing with highly touted former Mr. Ohio QB Evan Prater for the starting job. LSU transfer Corey Kiner is going to need to be counted on immediately to produce for a running attack that averaged 173.3 YPG.

DEFENSE

Six starters, including No. 4 overall pick CB Ahmad "Sauce" Gardner, are now in the NFL, so this unit will undergo a major overhaul in 2022.

The defensive line should remain a strength as veterans Malik Vann and Jabari Taylor are joined by 325-pound Virginia transfer Jowon Briggs in a three-man front. The trio combined for 8.5 sacks last season and will bring an experienced presence to a young defense. First-team All-MAC linebacker Ivan Pace transfers in from Miami (Ohio) and joins his brother Deshaun (94 tackles, 4 INTs) to man what should be a strong LB corps that also includes Ty Van Fossen (69 tackles, 5.5 TFL).

The secondary is the biggest issue as the Bearcats must replace All-American Gardner, in addition to Coby Bryant and Bryan Cook. Senior safety Ja'von Hicks and junior nickel Arquon Bush combined for five INTs last year and will need to provide leadership for a group that has three new and inexperienced starters.

OUTLOOK

Even with two companions – Houston and UCF – exiting with them to the Big 12 next season, the Bearcats will have the entire league gunning for them in what is a bit of a transitional year. A return to the CFP is highly unlikely, but they are still the team to beat in the AAC and have gone 16-0 in league play the last two seasons.

The offense got stuck in the mud a bit too often last season and it is a tough ask for a still high-level defense to produce 30 takeaways (third nationally in 2021).

Cincinnati gets a good measuring stick game right out of the gate with a trip to Arkansas to see if they can stay on the national radar. The Bearcats also get road testers at UCF and at SMU, but do avoid Houston and Memphis. – Wes Reynolds

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE OPPONENT (Est. Line) OppPR

9/3 at Arkansas (+2) 55

9/10 KENNESAW ST (-28.5) 30

9/17 vs. Miami Ohio (-17.5) 37

9/24 INDIANA (-19) 39.5

10/1 at Tulsa (-17) 35.5

10/8 SOUTH FLORIDA (-23.5) 35

10/22 at SMU (-5) 46

10/29 at UCF (-1) 50

11/5 NAVY (-25) 34

11/11 EAST CAROLINA (-17) 42

11/19 at Temple (-26.5) 25

11/26 TULANE (-16.5) 42.5

SCHEDULE
STRENGTH

38.26
(#74 of 131)

FIELD
RATINGS

4 / 0.1
(HOME/ROAD)

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

OVER 9

AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

+180

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF
ODDS TO WIN

200/1

TEAM TRENDS

- CINCINNATI IS 8-2 ATS (L10G) ON ROAD IN SEPTEMBER
- CINCINNATI IS 8-18 ATS (L10Y) AS FAVORITE OF MORE THAN 20 POINTS
- CINCINNATI IS 14-1 UNDER (L15G) AS UNDERDOG OF 7 OR LESS POINTS

2021 RESULTS RECORD: 13-1

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	CL	ATS	TOTAL
9/4	MIAMI OHIO	49-14	W	-23	W	49 0
9/11	MURRAY ST	42-7	W	-36.5	L	51.5 U
9/18	at Indiana	38-24	W	-4	W	50 0
10/2	at Notre Dame	24-13	W	-2	W	50.5 U
10/8	TEMPLE	52-3	W	-30	W	52.5 0
10/16	UCF	56-21	W	-21.5	W	56 0
10/23	at Navy	27-20	W	-29	L	49 U
10/30	at Tulane	31-12	W	-27.5	L	61.5 U
11/6	TULSA	28-20	W	-22.5	L	56.5 U
11/12	at South Florida	45-28	W	-24.5	L	59 0
11/20	SMU	48-14	W	-9.5	W	65.5 U
11/26	at East Carolina	35-13	W	-14.5	W	56.5 U
12/4	HOUSTON	35-20	W	-10.5	W	52.5 0
12/31	vs. Alabama	6-27	L	13	L	57 U

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT	RANK	STAT	RANK
Points Per Game	36.5	11	17.6	8
Yards Per Point	11.4	1	18.4	8
Plays Per Game	63.7	123		
Time of Possession	27:05	123		
3rd Down Conv. %	39.5%	65	33.0%	13
Total Yards Per Game	415.2	55	323.4	10
Yards Per Play	6.5	8	4.3	5
Rush Attempts Per Game	33.2	104		
Rush Yards Per Game	175.5	50	153.5	59
Yards Per Rush Attempt	5.3	10	3.7	23
Pass Attempts Per Game	28.8	86		
Completion %	64.5%	29	53.5%	4
Passing Yards Per Game	239.7	59	169.9	2
Yards Per Pass Attempt	8.3	25	5.8	2
Turnovers	1.4	65	2.2	6

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		59.5	30.2	3.35	-24.9	7-QB	42	7.4	10.9	7, DC	11.9	4.05	24.15
2020		58.5	33.8	2.23	-19.4	6-QB	36.6	6.71	12.45	9	16	4.48	20.17
2019		49	21.2	1.67	-18	7-QB	34.1	6.33	12.87	7	13.7	4.66	24.59
2018		50.5	23.9	2	-6.8	5-QB	35.8	6.36	13.42	7	11.9	4.36	23.3



KENT STATE

GOLDEN FLASHES

HEAD COACH: SEAN LEWIS (5TH)

OFF. COORDINATOR: ANDREW SOWDER • DEF. COORDINATOR: JEREMIAH JOHNSON
KENT, OH • DIX STADIUM

28.5 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#117 OF 131)

10 RETURNING STARTERS
OFFENSE: 4 • DEFENSE: 6

A year after winning the MAC East in dramatic fashion, the Golden Flashes will have to replace QB Dustin Crum, the 2021 MAC Player of the Year. Good news for Kent State is coach Sean Lewis, the architect of Flash FAST, is back for a fourth season after receiving outside interest this offseason.

OFFENSE

Collin Schlee, a dual-threat quarterback, is expected to replace Crum. The Golden Flashes' top receiver, Dante Cephas, is back after grabbing 82 receptions for 1,240 yards and nine touchdowns. Kent State did lose its second and third leading receivers. Running backs Marquez Cooper and Xavier Williams return after combining for 2,017 yards last season. The offensive line has a handful of returning starters and added a pair of Power 5 tackle transfers in Nolan Rumler from Michigan and Kevin Toth from Rutgers.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Jeremiah Johnson takes over the defense after nine seasons at Northern Iowa. Kent State allowed 36.3 points per game last season, 121st nationally. The Golden Flashes return seven starters on defense and added UCLA transfer A.J. Campbell to the defensive line. Safety Antwaine Richardson missed most of last season after transferring from Maryland.

OUTLOOK

Kent State might have one of the most challenging nonconference schedules in FBS with trips to Washington, Oklahoma and Georgia. Will the good fortune run out for the Golden Flashes in 2022? Kent State went 4-0 in one-possession games last season, including a 48-47 double-over win against Miami of Ohio. – Tim Murray

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT (Est. Line)	OppPR
9/3	at Washington (+22.5)	47.5
9/10	at Oklahoma (+33)	58
9/17	LIU POST (-40)	-7.5
9/24	at Georgia (+45)	69.5
10/1	OHIO U (-5.5)	26.5
10/8	at Miami Ohio (+12)	37
10/15	at Toledo (+18)	43
10/22	AKRON (-10)	23
11/1	BALL ST (-6.5)	26
11/9	at Bowling Green (-0.5)	25.5
11/16	E MICHIGAN (+0.5)	32.5
11/26	at Buffalo (+6.5)	30.5

SCHEDULE
STRENGTH

34.83
(#97 of 131)

FIELD
RATINGS

3.8 / -0.6
(HOME/ROAD)

SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY

UNDER 5

MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN

+900

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF
ODDS TO WIN

5000/1

TEAM TRENDS

- KENT STATE IS 12-3 ATS (L15G) ON ROAD - AS FAVORITE
- KENT STATE IS 0-7 ATS (L2Y) AS UNDERDOG
- KENT STATE IS 13-5 OVER (L5Y) IN NOVEMBER

2021 RESULTS RECORD: 7-7

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	CL	ATS	TOTAL
9/4	at Texas A&M	10-41	L	29.5	L	66.5 U
9/11	VMI	60-10	W	-17.5	W	69.5 O
9/18	at Iowa	7-30	L	22.5	L	55.5 U
9/25	at Maryland	16-37	L	13	L	71.5 U
10/2	BOWLING GREEN	27-20	W	-16.5	L	56 U
10/9	BUFFALO	48-38	W	-7	W	66 O
10/16	at W Michigan	31-64	L	7	L	68.5 O
10/23	at Ohio U	34-27	W	-5	W	68.5 U
11/3	N ILLINOIS	52-47	W	-3	W	72.5 O
11/10	at C Michigan	30-54	L	2.5	L	76.5 O
11/20	at Akron	38-0	W	-14	W	73 U
11/27	MIAMI OHIO	48-47	W	0	W	68 O
12/4	vs. N Illinois	23-41	L	-3.5	L	75.5 U
12/21	vs. Wyoming	38-52	L	3	L	60.5 O

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT	RANK	STAT	RANK
Points Per Game	30.9	38	38.3	121
Yards Per Point	15.5	91	12.7	113
Plays Per Game	77.6	13		
Time of Possession	26:17	128		
3rd Down Conv. %	41.6%	45	48.1%	124
Total Yards Per Game	479	8	485.9	120
Yards Per Play	6.2	26	6.2	108
Rush Attempts Per Game	45	10		
Rush Yards Per Game	229.8	4	210.7	117
Yards Per Rush Attempt	5.1	26	5.1	110
Pass Attempts Per Game	29.7	76		
Completion %	64.0%	34	64.5%	97
Passing Yards Per Game	249.2	51	275.2	115
Yards Per Pass Attempt	8.4	21	7.9	95
Turnovers	0.9	21	1.6	28

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		34	3.7	1.11	-6.3	10-QB	34.2	6.83	14.94	9	30.5	5.72	14.48
2020		39.5	9.6	-0.97	4.1	7-QB	37.8	6.55	14.14	6	41.3	7.52	11.89
2019		33	4.6	0.26	-0.5	9-QB	31.2	6.17	13.54	6	27.4	5.91	16.1
2018	Yes	24	-5.4	-0.47	14.9	7-OC	25.6	5.4	16.07	6-DC	30.9	5.87	14.15



AKRON ZIPS

HEAD COACH: JOE MOORHEAD (1ST)

OFF. COORDINATOR: JOE MOORHEAD • DEF. COORDINATOR: TIM TIBESAR

AKRON, OH • INFOCISION STADIUM-SUMMA FIELD

23 STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATING
(#125 OF 131)

16 RETURNING STARTERS
OFFENSE: 8 • DEFENSE: 8

Joe Moorhead takes over the Zips program after the Tom Arth era came to a close nine games into the 2021 season. The Zips have not reached a bowl since 2017 and have won a combined three games over the last three seasons. Moorhead has a record of 52-25 as a head coach at Fordham and Mississippi State and most recently was the offensive coordinator at Oregon. Akron hiring Moorhead away from Oregon was one of the most impressive coaching moves of the offseason. He has the potential to lead Akron to new heights over the coming years, but 2022 will likely be a struggle.

OFFENSE

The Zips were 119th in scoring offense last season and have to replace QB Zach Gibson, who transferred to Georgia Tech, and leading WR Konata Mumpfield, who transferred to Pitt. DJ Irons (296 rushing yards) will likely take over at quarterback, but Albany transfer Jeff Undercuffler could compete for the job. In 2019, Undercuffler threw 41 touchdown passes and helped lead Albany to the FCS playoffs. Running back Jonzell Norrils (573 yards, 3 TDs) returns and Akron added RB Cam Wiley from Minnesota. At wide receiver, the Zips were busy in the portal, adding Alex Adams (LSU), Shockey Jacques-Louis (Pitt) and Daniel George (Penn State). Jacques-Louis had over 1,000 yards receiving in 45 games at Pitt. Akron also added tight end TJ Banks from West Virginia. TE Tristian Brank had 25 receptions for 269 yards last season.

DEFENSE

Defensively, Akron returns 16 of its 18 top tacklers. However, the Zips averaged a woeful 1.25 sacks per game last season. LB Bubba Arslanian returns after missing the final eight games last season because of injury. Arslanian had 43 tackles in the first four games. Akron added a couple of Power 5 transfers to the secondary, KJ Martin (West Virginia) and Cam Threatt (Mississippi State).

OUTLOOK

Akron should open the season with a win over FCS St. Francis (Pa.) but has trips to Michigan State, Tennessee and Liberty to round out the nonconference schedule. If Moorhead can find the recipe to blend the transfers with returning players, Akron should surpass last season's win total. — *Dave Tuley*

2022 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT (Est. Line)	OppPR
9/1	ST FRANCIS PA (-14.5)	9.5
9/10	at Michigan St (+35)	56
9/17	at Tennessee (+34.5)	54.5
9/24	at Liberty (+22)	40.5
10/1	BOWLING GREEN (+0.5)	25.5
10/8	at Ohio U (+7)	26.5
10/15	C MICHIGAN (+12)	36.5
10/22	at Kent St (+10)	28.5
10/29	MIAMI OHIO (+13)	37
11/8	E MICHIGAN (+9)	32.5
11/19	at Buffalo (+12)	30.5
11/26	at N Illinois (+15.5)	35.5

**SCHEDULE
STRENGTH**

35.95
(#88 of 131)

**FIELD
RATINGS**

1.2 / -0.5
(HOME/ROAD)

**SEASON WIN
TOTAL PLAY**

OVER 2.5

**MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE
ODDS TO WIN**

100/1

**COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF
ODDS TO WIN**

10000/1

TEAM TRENDS

- AKRON IS 18-13 ATS (L10Y) ON ROAD AS UNDERDOG OF MORE THAN 14 POINTS
- AKRON IS 4-21 ATS (L25G) AT HOME AS UNDERDOG OF MORE THAN 7 POINTS
- AKRON IS 17-1 UNDER (L18G) AS FAVORITE OF 10 OR MORE POINTS

2021 RESULTS RECORD: 2-10

DATE	OPPONENT	SCORE	SU	CL	ATS	TOTAL
9/4	at Auburn	10-60	L	37.5	L	56.5 O
9/11	TEMPLE	24-45	L	6.5	L	52 O
9/18	BRYANT	35-14	W	-13	W	49.5 U
9/25	at Ohio St	7-59	L	48.5	L	66.5 U
10/2	OHIO U	17-34	L	9.5	L	55 U
10/9	at Bowling Green	35-20	W	14	W	46 O
10/16	at Miami Ohio	21-34	L	20	W	51 O
10/23	BUFFALO	10-45	L	13.5	L	58.5 U
11/2	BALL ST	25-31	L	20	W	58 U
11/9	at W Michigan	40-45	L	26.5	W	62 O
11/20	KENT ST	0-38	L	14	L	73 U
11/27	at Toledo	14-49	L	28.5	L	57.5 O

2021 STATS & RANKS

	OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
	STAT	RANK	STAT	RANK
Points Per Game	18.5	117	41.8	126
Yards Per Point	17.7	118	11.9	123
Plays Per Game	71	56		
Time of Possession	30:50	34		
3rd Down Conv. %	37.0%	85	55.0%	129
Total Yards Per Game	326	115	498.4	125
Yards Per Play	4.6	119	7.4	129
Rush Attempts Per Game	35.6	79		
Rush Yards Per Game	115.6	106	268.9	129
Yards Per Rush Attempt	3.2	117	6.6	129
Pass Attempts Per Game	29.9	73		
Completion %	62.9%	44	66.7%	114
Passing Yards Per Game	210.4	86	229.5	68
Yards Per Pass Attempt	7	83	9.1	123
Turnovers	1.5	71	0.9	115

STEVE MAKINEN'S EFFECTIVE STATISTICS

SEASON	NEW HC?	SM PR	EFF STRG	EYPP+/-	SM BR	OFFRS-NEW	EOPPG	EOYPP	EOYPPT	DEFRS-NEW	EDPPG	EDFYPP	EDYPPT
2021		17	-12.4	-1.08	11.1	10-QB	22.3	5.65	16.51	10	35.2	6.73	12.48
2020		15.5	-17.8	-3.6	25.5	7-QB	10	4.43	26.55	6	40.9	8.03	11.95
2019	Yes	7.5	-23.8	-1.56	18.2	7-QB, OC	10.3	4.07	23.91	3, DC	34.9	5.63	11.7
2018		26.5	-2.3	-0.07	14.4	5	23.3	4.89	13.35	9	25.6	4.96	14.47



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