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College Football Betting Cues

By Luken Karel

A number of dicey factors, including the disparity between the nation's finest teams and those that still have struggling programs, the massive turnover of personnel each year, and the absurdly large number of teams involved, conspire to make college football betting far more difficult than its NFL counterpart.

With the college gridiron campaign currently in full swing, bettors would be wise to join experienced bookmakers in analyzing these three key factors:

The Gap Factor: The difference between upper echelon teams and middle to bottom teams can be enormous in college football betting. When you have that situation, certain oddsmaking criteria go out the window. For example, when you have an Ohio State or a USC on the road, the talent level versus an Indiana or an Arizona is going to be so wide that it will negate any home field advantage those teams may have. Of course, that goes for other college super powers such as a Florida or a Texas.

So, although most books use Power Ratings as a place to begin the pointspread making process, they're not nearly as reliable as they are for the NFL. For example, when Texas opened the season with a sparring partner in North Texas State, it was difficult to know what the right number was. Most books settled on 42 with the knowledge that the final score would depend on the mercy of the Long Horns. Alas, Texas showed little sympathy for its overwhelmed opponent, crushing North Texas State, 56-7 for the cover.

Given the above example—Louisville (-40) versus Temple, Sept. 9 was another—typically, bookmakers often add a touchdown or so to the raw numbers. Conversely, if you're using pure Power Ratings, they can be skewed if you're looking at scores such as 56-0, 62-0 and 72-7 heading into conference play. That's a different level.

The People Factor: From year to year you have a much greater turnover of personnel in the college game than you do in the NFL. That means there's a sharper learning curve each year for the colleges. You might get every bit of information about a team for two months but then every thought and every projection you had for that team could change after the first game. New players really can't be judged

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until bet takers see them in a game. Admittedly, the college football betting public is in the same boat.

So even though responsible bookmakers put in an incredible amount of work during the summer to get a feel for the college teams, they never know if their assessments are valid until the teams start playing.

The Numbers Factor: There's no doubt that it's easier to keep tabs on 32 NFL teams than it is to keep track of over 100 college squads. The NFL is all there for you, on television every weekend. In college football betting, the big games are there but most bet house personnel aren't going to see a lot of Wyoming or Louisiana Tech on the tube. As oddsmakers, they need to be right on every game. The bettor only has to be right on a few games each week to be successful. Obviously, from the perspective of the bookmakers, it's a lot more dangerous posting numbers on 50 college games than it is on 16 NFL games.

There are a number of other differences between the collegiate gridiron game and its NFL cousin.

For one, in general, bettors are far more willing to lay big numbers in college than they are in the NFL. It's just the nature of the non-professional gambler to lay it rather than take it. Or as one prominent bookmaker pointed out, "You have to give them a minus or they don't know which side to take. When in doubt, they go with the favorite."

Scheduling also is more of a consideration in college football betting because the players lack maturity and are more susceptible to the emotional high of playing a rival, not to mention the letdown often associated with games preceding or following one of those contests.

Another thing to watch is the emergence of a betting glamour team. It's a team that gets hot early and captures the imagination of the college football betting public. LSU did that when it went 11-2 against the spread in 2003. Auburn was the hot team a year before that. Bookmakers are aware of these teams and are constantly adjusting the numbers, but until that team loses a couple of times, the public bets them every week.

By Luken Karel for

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College Football Picks Explained

By Jack Peterson

Picking college football games has become more and more popular in recent years. The process of picking the games happens in a number of forums in a number of places every year during the fall season of college football. Understanding what the situations are and why picking college football games are enjoyable to some makes the whole industry more understandable. Here, college football picks are explained in the context of several situations.

The Spread

To have college football picks explained properly, you need to first understand point spreads. The point spread is how sports books encourage betting on both sides of any game. A number is assigned to a team in the game. That number is how many points the book believes that team would need to have added to their score for you, the better, to believe they might win the game. For instance, if Indiana is playing Northwestern, the book may say the line is Indiana plus 3. That means, if you bet on Indiana and they win or lose by less than three, you win the bet. The spread is part of what makes picking college football games difficult and exciting.

The Office Pool

College football picks explained in the context of the office pool, or any pool for that matter, make it easier to understand. In a pool, money is collected from a number of individuals and held centrally. The money is then paid out to the winner, and sometimes paid to second, third, etc. places in the competition as well. In a pool, the participants would compete by picking college football games every week. In many pools, the games are picked using the point spread (see above). This makes the selections more challenging and thus the money harder to win.

Straight Gambling

College football picks explained to one may also be mentioned in connection with actual gambling with a sports book. Some people who enjoy gambling like to use sports books to bet on their favorite college football picks. That is because they at least feel like they have some knowledge of what is going on and have a fighting chance. Unlike casino games, there is little about football gambling you don't control except for the lines. That false sense of control is what makes picking college football games as a way of gambling incredibly popular.

That, in a nutshell, is college football picks explained. You will find that no matter where you go, there are people picking college football games for a number of reasons. By learning what the betting lines and point spreads are, you have a better idea of how the process works. Additionally, by understanding how a pool works and how much many people enjoy straight up gambling on college football picks you can see what the appeal is in picking the games. Though it may not be your cup of tea, you will find that there are thousands of people out there who pick college football games every week for one reason or another.

Jack Peterson has an interest in Football Picks related topics. To access more information on

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