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Volume 43 Issue 1

NCAAF Week 0 , 2024

FOOTBALL IS BACK

NCAA LANDSCAPE:

With the 2024 college football season on the horizon, sports betting enthusiasts are eagerly anticipating the opportunity to place wagers on their favorite teams. This year's betting landscape is expected to be as competitive as ever, with plenty of value to be found for savvy bettors.

Utilize Discipline - This is probably one of the hardest guidelines for the average gambler to accomplish. You must be selective man. It's impossible to win if you bet every game on the board or a game just because it is televised. There always seems to be a nucleus of teams with high rankings and TV exposure. Thus the trap is set to catch the unsuspecting football bettor betting on the big name teams, which are overrated because of their reputation. The bookmakers realize these and set exorbitant prices on those big names. It may be more profitable to look for the underdogs anxious to prove that they can be competitive with anyone and this appearance is their "12th man on the field".

Shop Around - Use as many bookmakers/sportsbooks as you can. Their lines will vary some and you might as well take advantage of point differences in your favor. You might even catch a middle, a situation in which you're risking \$1 to make \$20 or you may side the play and get \$10 for your risk of \$1. It's amazing how many games fall near or on the pointspread number, so this definitely warrants a shot. With the introduction of offshore books, the opportunities of middle situations have increased. An offshore book is an excellent place to shop and with the convenience of home. Now sports betting is all over the USA, as many states have legalized sports betting. Hey, dynamic line movements from offshore books often open middle opportunities. This will make a substantial difference in your bottom line. Hey, middling can be a big boost to your season ending bankroll, so I strongly urge you to consider looking for middle opportunities.

Find Trustworthy Books - After some investigative analysis, get yourself ready and secure with reputable sportsbooks. I tell my customers that the sports book explosion is the best thing that could have happened for the smart bettor. I personally use offshore books in addition to my legal state sportsbooks, and other old school outlets. Then I bet where the price is right. Be careful, I have heard many horror stories about offshore sportsbooks, so make sure you go with a reputable sportsbook. One of my all time favorites is [MY BOOKIE](#). Not only are they reputable, but they have many contests that are free. I like their weekly football squares where you can win some serious cash.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

FLORIDA ST – 11.5 Over GEORGIA TECH by 1

Saturday 12:00 PM ET

ACC Season Opener is in Dublin. There is a lot to unwrap here beyond the make-up of the two teams, taking place in Dublin's faraway destination. Still, it's going to be the same for both teams. Florida State as an 11 point favorite, and it makes sense for a team that rightfully felt jilted on some levels being shut out of the College Football Playoff picture at the end of last season after a 13-0 run under head coach Mike Norvell. Still, some shifting personnel has some doubting a repeat of that excellence. On top of that, we saw the Yellow Jackets under first-year head coach Brett Key have a nice little uptick season in 2023, going over .500 and winning a bowl game, two things that hadn't happened to them in a season in nearly a decade.

With a slew of departures including QB Jordan Travis, it's nice the 'Noles were able to secure the steady hand of the well-traveled Uiagalelei, a former starter at both Clemson and at Oregon State last season. A capable passer, Uiagalelei is also nimble and solid to help make Florida State more of a running-force behind that nice offensive line. With backs like Holmes, Toafili, and Williams, Uiagalelei has a lot of nice things to lean on as he makes his transition to yet another program. It's not an easy spot for the quarterback, coming into a new system and having to do so across the pond. With that double-digit spread and against a decent Yellow Jackets squad, an FSU backer in this spot would like to see this offense get off to a fast start.

There could be some credence that this would be a more-desirable spot later in the season for the Seminoles. Georgia Tech has some question marks and are far from an established force in their own right, but they could be sneaky-good this season—tough in the trenches, while returning a lot of key pieces on offense. It's a plump spread in conference, along with a road-trip that is tough enough on professional athletes, let alone college kids. Again, both teams face the same rigors, but it's the Seminoles needing to cover the big number. A lot of moving pieces for Florida State, the newness of a season and the exotic site of this game could have a way of narrowing the gap that might exist between these two teams as the season gets older.

You never like to base a winning case on anything that starts with things they don't do well, but a positive outlook on Georgia Tech could include the conditions at play. If you're taking the Yellow Jackets with the points, you're hoping the long travel and new look on both sides of the ball for the Seminoles help tip this more in your favor. This is a time when you're looking for a little help, as this is far from a conventional ACC spot. But that's far from the only angle.

Quarterback Haynes King really helped this Georgia Tech offense become more versatile since coming over from Texas A&M. Now, in his second season under Key, he lends a real aerial flair to an offense known for running, coming off a 27-TD season. This also might not be the worst spot to see the multi-pronged GT running game take hold, led by RB Jamal Haynes and a handful of talented backs. With Haynes helping open things up a bit with his passing game, maybe they can get some of these running-schemes rolling and control the tempo of this game in spots.

Player departures aside, this is still a strong Seminoles team well-coached by Mike Norvell that has an axe to grind this season and should be ready to go. It's one thing to have all these

ideas of what the Yellow Jackets might do or could do, but they still have to deal with a strong defense. And with that front populated by the likes of Quindarius Jones and Patrick Payton, that GT offensive line will be greatly tested and Haynes could find himself in a less-than-clean pocket. Coming off a 16-INT season, this defense could put him in some of those situations we saw last season where things get a little shaky for the Georgia Tech field general. There is also a flip side to that coin where Haynes lets it fly a little in the underdog role and puts some pressure on this FSU team. This is a Yellow Jackets team that finally has some of the aerial weaponry to make that a strong possibility.

It's just that when you look at the double-digit favorites available as we begin the college football schedule, there are certainly teams with fewer obstacles in their way than the Seminoles this week. The surprise that would register here with a thorough beating of Georgia Tech by Florida St. would be zero. But you're still dealing with newness, travel, an upstart opponent, and a Florida State offense that at least looks to be entering the season with a more run-heavy style that might not be ideal for covering big numbers or if the situation arises, coming back from point-deficits to cover. I'm going to take the Yellow Jackets.

Projected Score: Florida St 28, Georgia Tech 27

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Montana St -13.5 Over NEW MEXICO by 21 Saturday 12:00 PM ET

The Montana State Bobcats have been one of the top programs in the FCS, consistently competing for Big Sky Conference titles and making deep playoff runs. Last season, the Bobcats finished with a 10-3 record, narrowly missing out on the FCS Championship Game after a heartbreaking 35-34 overtime loss to North Dakota State. Head Coach Brent Vigen, entering his fourth season with the team, has built a program that prides itself on physical play and a strong rushing attack.

The Bobcats' offense is led by dual-threat quarterback Sean Chambers, who is entering his senior season. Chambers threw for 2,102 yards and 18 touchdowns last season, while also rushing for 712 yards and 10 scores. His ability to extend plays with his legs and make throws on the run makes him a difficult quarterback to defend. Montana State's offense is centered around the run game, and they have a deep stable of running backs led by Elijah Elliott, who rushed for 1,120 yards and 12 touchdowns in 2023.

The Bobcats' offensive line, anchored by All-Big Sky center Justice Perkins, is one of the best in the FCS. This group has been instrumental in paving the way for a rushing attack that averaged 250.3 yards per game last season, ranking fourth in the nation. Montana State's ability to control the line of scrimmage and dominate time of possession is a key factor in their success.

On defense, Montana State is known for its aggressive, hard-hitting style. The Bobcats allowed just 20.1 points per game last season, ranking in the top 10 in the FCS. Linebacker Callahan O'Reilly, the team's leading tackler, returns for his senior season after recording 115 tackles, 8 tackles for loss, and 4 sacks in 2023. The defensive line is anchored by defensive end Brody Grebe, who had 10 sacks last season and is one of the top pass rushers in the Big Sky Conference.

The secondary, led by cornerback James Campbell and safety Ty Okada, is a ball-hawking unit that recorded 12 interceptions last season. This group will be tested by New Mexico's

passing attack, but they have the experience and talent to hold their own. Montana State's defense thrives on creating turnovers and putting their offense in favorable field position, which could be a key factor in this game.

The New Mexico Lobos are looking to rebound from a disappointing 2023 season in which they finished 3-9 overall and 1-7 in Mountain West Conference play. Head Coach Danny Gonzales, entering his fifth season with the program, faces the challenge of turning around a team that has struggled to find consistency in recent years. The Lobos have shown flashes of potential, but they have been unable to sustain success over the course of a full season.

Offensively, New Mexico will be led by junior quarterback Isaiah Chavez, who started the final three games of the 2023 season. Chavez threw for 1,345 yards, 8 touchdowns, and 5 interceptions last year, while also rushing for 456 yards and 6 scores. Chavez is a mobile quarterback with a strong arm, and his development will be key to the Lobos' success this season. New Mexico's offense struggled to find its rhythm last year, averaging just 21.3 points per game, but there is optimism that Chavez can take a step forward in 2024.

The Lobos' running game will be led by senior running back Andrew Henry, who rushed for 803 yards and 9 touchdowns last season. Henry is a tough, physical runner who excels between the tackles, and he will be counted on to carry a heavy workload this season. The offensive line, however, is a concern, as the unit struggled to protect the quarterback and open up running lanes last year. The Lobos allowed 34 sacks in 2023, and improving the play of the offensive line will be crucial if they hope to compete in the Mountain West this season.

Defensively, New Mexico allowed 34.7 points per game last season, ranking near the bottom of the Mountain West. The Lobos struggled to stop the run, giving up 209.5 rushing yards per game, which was a major factor in their inability to win close games. The defense will be led by senior linebacker Reco Hannah, who recorded 98 tackles and 7.5 tackles for loss last season. Hannah is a sideline-to-sideline player with a nose for the football, and he will need to have a big game against Montana State's potent rushing attack.

The secondary, led by cornerback Tavian Combs and safety Jerrick Reed II, will be tested by Montana State's passing game. Combs, who had 3 interceptions last season, is a lockdown corner who will likely be matched up against the Bobcats' top receiver, while Reed is a hard-hitting safety who excels in run support. The Lobos will need to improve their pass rush, as they recorded just 18 sacks last season, if they hope to slow down Montana State's balanced offense.

The key to this game will likely be the battle in the trenches. Montana State's offensive line, one of the best in the FCS, will go up against a New Mexico defensive front that struggled mightily against the run last season. If the Bobcats can establish their running game early, it could be a long day for the Lobos. On the other hand, New Mexico will need to find a way to protect Isaiah Chavez and give him time to make plays downfield. The Lobos' offensive line will face a stiff test against Montana State's aggressive defensive front, and their ability to hold up in pass protection could be the difference in the game.

Montana State was one of the best teams in the FCS against the spread last season, finishing with a 9-4 ATS record. The Bobcats were particularly strong as favorites, covering the spread in 7 of 10 games in which they were favored by more than a touchdown. Montana State's ability to dominate opponents, particularly in the run game, made them a popular pick, and they consistently exceeded expectations set by oddsmakers.

New Mexico struggled against the spread last season, finishing with a 4-8 ATS record. The Lobos were inconsistent as underdogs, covering the spread in just 3 of 9 games in which they were not favored. New Mexico's struggles on both sides of the ball made them a difficult team to trust ATS, and their inability to close out games led to several disappointing ATS results.

Montana State is 6-1 ATS in their last 7 non-conference games. New Mexico is 3-6 ATS in their last 9 home games. The strengths of the Bobcats are facing the weakness of the Lobos. I'm going with the team that can be trusted to perform at a high level. Lay the lumber and take the Montana St.

Projected Score: Montana St 37, New Mexico 16

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

S.M.U. - 26 Over NEVADA by 34

Saturday 8:00 PM ET

The SMU Mustangs come to Reno for a season-opening showdown with the Nevada Wolf Pack. The Mustangs are coming off a big season under head coach Rhett Lashlee, winning more games than they have since 1982 with an 11-3 season. They now go from the American Athletic Conference to the ACC. Things, however, haven't been going so great for Nevada after they saw a mini-surge earlier in the decade. They are now coming off consecutive 2-10 seasons, working under first-year head coach Jeff Choate.

There are some variables at play with the Mustangs entering a tougher conference this season, but first, having to orient themselves west to the dry warmth and altitude of Reno, which can be an off-putting place to play, especially for unfamiliar non-Mountain West teams. That built-in perk hasn't been much help for the Wolf Pack, with a total of two wins in this stadium since November of 2021. Taking it a step further, since game three of the '22 season, two straight wins in October last season are their only triumphs. It's a program in a fair degree of trouble, hence the hefty point-allowance. Still, it's a big number for SMU to cover against a team with whom they have no real connection in a weird setting to open the season.

Without going too much into the past, we've seen SMU under Lashlee generally stick it to underwhelming opposition like Nevada. SMU will have a lot of questions to answer as they try to see if what they've been doing with great success in the AAC translates to the ACC, but that analysis comes down the road with a pair of cupcakes to open the season with Nevada this week and Houston Baptist to follow.

There are issues that could come up for SMU to bite them, namely a secondary facing a lot of moving pieces and newness. But that's not likely to be tested by the likes of the Nevada passing game. Despite operating a bit under the radar, SMU is really a complete team with a lot of things to like—a good running game, talented receivers, and a really solid front seven on defense. Aerially, Preston Stone and his receivers could form to become one of the better passing offenses—even in the more difficult ACC.

I think the problem for those taking an optimistic view of Nevada and that enticing point-allowance is that their defense could be in dire straits this season. A group that was already struggling mightily to field a capable unit now lost two of their better contributors, leaving one to wonder what they can deliver this season. SMU has been spending the better part of the last few seasons putting up points in bunches and not letting off the gas much when they have their foot on an opponent's throat.

Taking losses and suffering is nothing new for Nevada the last few seasons. But they can have this vague sort of doggedness in them. The losses keep piling, but it's not always a romp. And at home the last few seasons, there have only been a small handful of times where they get manhandled and run off the field. Last season, for example, they opened the season with a 50+-point home-loss to

USC and ended with a bad loss at home to Wyoming.

Nevada has a defense that will unlikely keep SMU from throwing a pretty big point-total up there. It might not be long before the Wolf Pack have to abandon the strategy with which they enter this game, which is likely to run and slow things down. I see the Mustangs opening quickly, as their superior offensive firepower starts making a dent in short order.

With Jordan Hudson coming over to give Stone another aerial piece, I see an SMU offense maybe looking down the field a little more this season. They have a lot of offensive talent in the air, and the sheer talent of their backfield behind a line returning almost everyone should make them pretty tough. And even if things start getting out of hand, the idea of Nevada slipping in late for a backdoor cover becomes more-dicey with SMU looking to use that time to bring along QB Kevin Jennings. So, Nevada is going to need to withstand four quarters of this offense—no easy task for a defense that will struggle to compete even in the MWC.

Season openers can be tricky, and sometimes it's hard to bring out your best in Reno. The Wolf Pack can sometimes surpass what they are on paper and maybe new head coach Jeff Choate can get them pointed in the right direction. It's just that 24 points don't really seem that bad for an SMU squad looking to get an important season off to a positive note where they're likely to be pressing most of the game. A score along the lines of 37-13 seems optimistic if a lot of things go right for Nevada, with a game where SMU can thrive looking a lot worse. I'm going to lay the points and take the Mustangs.

Projected Score: SMU 44, Nevada 10

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BEST BETS

Delaware St at HAWAII Over 1st HALF TOTAL by 9

For the first time since 1979, the University of Hawaii will play an HBCU when Delaware State comes to Honolulu on Saturday of Week 0.

Clarence T.C. Ching Complex will be the site when the Rainbow Warriors kick off the third season under head coach Timmy Chang. After a rise from three to five wins in 2023, Chang will look to get Hawaii playing in a bowl for the first time since 2020.

For Delaware State, the football program has gone a decade without a winning record. Head coach Lee Hull enters his second season with the Hornets, generating just a single victory in 2023.

The university has been a part of the MEAC since 1971, making a postseason bowl or playoff only three times since the program began play in 1924. Furthermore, Delaware State consistently fell to the bottom of FCS ranks thanks to a negative point differential of -21 points on the season.

With the Hawaii entering this game as a heavy favorite of -39.5, where does the betting value lie?

The Hornets were a well-balanced unit a season ago, opting to run the ball on 54% of offensive attempts. Hull called outside zone read as the primary rush concept for the offense, running strictly out of 11 personnel with only 16% of passing attempts using play action.

Junior running back Marquis Gillis returns after serving as the workhorse in 2023 with 140 rushing attempts. Gillis had a pedestrian 2.9 yards after contact in 2023 and also served as a weapon in the passing game with 12 catches on 18 targets.

Quarterback Marqui Adams returns to the roster after leading the Hornets with 184 passing attempts last season. The sophomore signal-caller logged more than double the number of

turnover-worthy play rates than big-time throws, ending the season with an even distribution of touchdowns to interceptions.

There are experienced weapons on the roster, as receiver NyGhee Lolley and tight end Edward Core led the team in targets.

The same level of pass protection is expected from the Hornets, as four of the five starters return. That unit is led by tackle Malcolm Jefferies, the team's best pass- and run-blocking lineman.

Despite the returns on offense, Delaware State ranked outside the top 100 in FCS in numerous offensive categories, including scoring, red-zone efficiency and time of possession.

Hawaii's 2-4-5 defense boasts one of the higher marks in returning production in FBS, generating at least 80% of returning experience in tackles and pressures.

Safety Peter Manuma leads the way with three interceptions and a pass breakup from last season.

Four of the top five tacklers also return for a Warriors defense that finished top-15 in pressure rate but struggled to find consistency in tackling and containing pass explosives.

Chang's Run-and-Shoot offense picked up steam at the end of last season, winning three of the final four games in the Mountain West.

Hawaii returns 84% of a loaded offense, led by quarterback Brayden Schager. After severe struggles in his first two seasons, Schager dropped his turnover-worthy play rate to 2.2% while increasing his overall depth of target.

More importantly, the signal-caller learned to deal with pressure by limiting his turnover-worthy play rate to 2.6% in 212 pressured dropbacks.

The biggest news from camp is the suspension and depth chart exclusion of star wide receiver Steven McBride.

The good news is the return of slot receivers Pofele Ashlock and Koali Nishigaya, who generated 169 targets, 1,154 yards and 10 combined receiving touchdowns.

Alex Perry and Jonah Panoke also return out wide after racking up 69 targets last season, giving Schager one of the more dynamic passing attacks in all of the Group of Five.

Delaware State runs a 3-3-5 scheme with a coverage tendency of Cover 3. Schager posted an average Success Rate and EPA per Play in more than 150 snaps against Cover 3 a season ago.

However, the Hornets may struggle against Hawaii's Run-and-Shoot after finishing 120th of 122 FCS teams in passing efficiency defense a season ago.

Edge Eric Montes and defensive interior Darren Cook return to the Delaware State defensive line after posting a combined 43 pressures a season ago. More importantly, the Hornets return 11 of their top 12 tacklers, led by linebacker Charles Brown Jr.

There are two conclusions that could be made about Delaware State to kick off the 2024 season.

First, power ratings show the Hornets are nearly the worst FCS team in the nation. However, secondly, the returning experience on both sides of the ball gives bettors something to love.

With a returning starter at the skill positions, just a single loss on the offensive line and 11 of the 12 top tacklers back, there's experience for the underdog in this game.

Chang is not expected to flash the entire playbook with UCLA on deck for Hawaii in Week 1. Even with McBride out, the Rainbow Warriors will look to get downfield on the first snap with the Run-and-Shoot offense.

The Delaware State defense didn't show enough against the pass or in the red zone last season to believe it can keep Hawaii out of the end zone in this game. Both teams should find success early before Chang goes vanilla on the play sheet and starts sitting his starters to prevent injury, especially with UCLA on deck. My value play is over the 29 point total in the first half.

Projected Score: 1ST HALF ONLY HAWAII 31, Delaware St 7

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